TRIO OF MANORS FOR WEST SOMERSET 50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

ISSUE 341 January 16 – February 13, 2026

# HERITAGE RAILWAY

THE COMPLETE PRESERVATION NEWS MAGAZINE

## Talyllyn scoops £3.7m grant for major redevelopment project

WINTER GALAS STRIKE GOLD FOR SOUTH DEVON, SWANAGE AND SEVERN VALLEY



## *Flying Scotsman* set for 'Shakespeare Express'

Plus Mid-Hants, Great Central (Nottingham) and East Lancashire visits

NO. 341
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■ LLANGOLLEN'S LAST BR FOOTPLATEMAN RETIRES ■ WELSH HIGHLAND LANDSLIP CLEARANCE WORK BEGINS ■ BOILER FOR NEW-BUILD GRESLEY P2 DELIVERED TO DARLINGTON ■ BRIDGE WORKS SCUPPER MOORSLINE'S WINTER WHITBY TRIPS

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**Didcot Railway Centre volunteers and visitors welcome in 2026 with steam locomotives including GWR prairie No. 4144 and 0-4-2T No. 1466 given a Y26 headcode on New Year's Day.** FRANK DUMBLETON

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# Will *Flying Scotsman* lead the way again?

RAILWAY200 saw pride in Britain's world-changing transport legacy reach a new pinnacle, and the Stockton & Darlington Railway of 1825 was celebrated in a more than befitting manner.

This year, we mark another momentous occasion: the 75th anniversary of the sowing of the seeds by Tom Rolt and co that led to our proud heritage railway sector, beginning with the Talyllyn marking another world first – the initial line to be saved and run by volunteers.

That landmark anniversary has already been splendidly marked by a £3.7 million National Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the major redevelopment of Pendre works and volunteer accommodation at Tywyn Wharf, as reported on Headline News, pages 6 and 7.

However, our sector is already steering a course for the next major milestone in its history: the reunification of the two heritage-era Great Central railways.

We were absolutely delighted to hear that none other than the world's most famous steam locomotive, A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman*, will be the star guest at the Great Central Railway (Nottingham) in May, following its outings with Vitnage Trains' 'Shakespeare Express' in February snd its visit to the Mid-Hants Railwsay in March.

Guaranteed to pull in thegeneral public en masse as well as the anticipated enthusiast crowds, *Scotsman*'s visit is all set open up the vista of the enormous potential of the reunified GCR.

> "A reunified GCR has enormous potential to become one of world's greatest heritage lines."

As previously reported, this year will see further stages on building the new link north of Loughborough Central station advance, but to complete this phenomenal project, more money will be needed – and lots of it. If the past history of the heritage movement again runs true to form, *Flying Scotsman*'s visit may well inspire more volunteers to offer their services to one or both lines and prospective donors to give their support.

A reunified GCR has enormous potential to become one of world's greatest heritage lines, complete with a much-varied abundance of features and station venues between the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre and Leicester North station, including the fabled double-track section, the gem that is the Mountsorrel freight branch, but perhaps most importantly, a main line connection which, once it enters regular use for main line tour operators, has all the potential to wave a magic wand for the local tourist economy.

Everyone who cares about transport heritage in the wake of the resounding success of Railway 200 should get behind GCR reunification in any way they can, and this is the occasion to make our mark. The GCR's location near the heart of England – yes, it really is the Great Central in more ways than one ˜ has the potential to see it develop into the equivalent of a working museum of international standard.

**RobinJones** Editor

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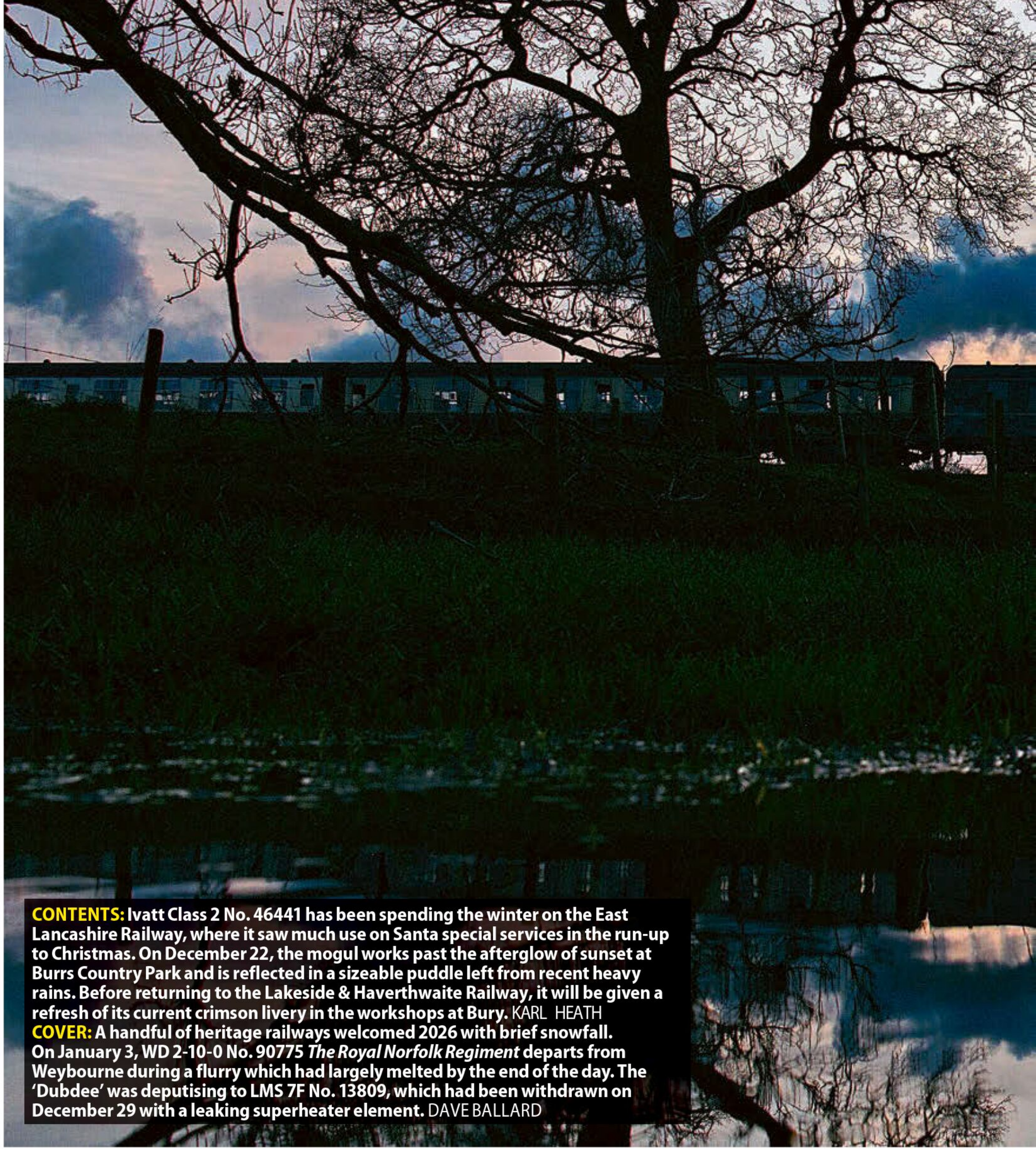



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## People in the Picture

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# Talyllyn secures £3.7 million Heritage Lottery grant to support major redevelopment proposal

Made possible with Heritage Fund

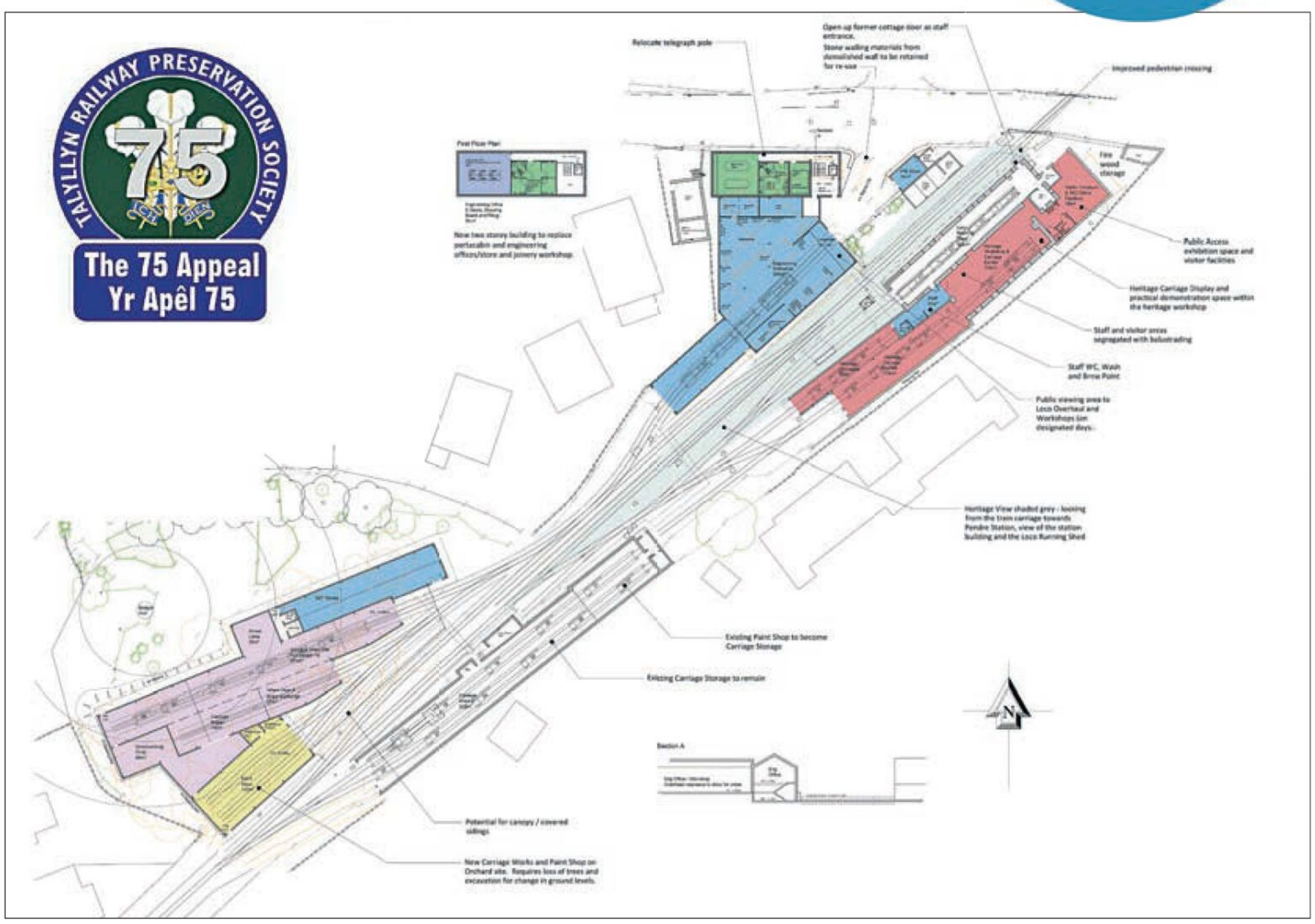
**By Owen Hayward**

THE future of the world's first volunteer-run heritage railway is in safe hands as the Talyllyn Railway revealed that it has successfully been awarded a grant of almost £3.7 million that will help protect the line's rich industrial heritage and strengthen the volunteer movement that pioneered railway preservation.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 318, in March 2024 the TR launched the 75 Appeal, called Preserving Our Past, Building Our Future, which looked to support a major redevelopment proposal of the line's Pendre works and volunteer accommodation at Tywyn Wharf in order to replace life and time-expired facilities to ensure the railway survives the next 75 years.

The appeal initially sought to raise £500,000 over the course of five years, which would back up what the railway hoped to receive through grant funding.

This amount was achieved well ahead of schedule, being met through both collected and pledged monies by July 2025; however, by this point, the rise in costs saw the target revised to £750,000. Following receipt of an initial National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £110,000 in October 2022 to develop its proposal, on August 5, 2025, the TR submitted its final application for £3.9 million to the NLHF. Just before Christmas, the railway received the news that it was to be successfully awarded £3,697,911 – almost the entire amount it had asked for.




**Early concept art showing proposals for the Pendre redevelopment. Plans to utilise an old orchard will no longer progress, meaning the shed on the left will no longer be incorporated. Other options are therefore being looked at to accommodate the necessary facilities.** TR

Situated in Gwynedd, the railway stretches 7½ miles from Tywyn Wharf to Nant Gwernol, near Abergynolwyn. Originally built in 1864 to serve Bryneglwys slate quarry and famously rescued by volunteers in 1951 as the world's first preserved railway, the Talyllyn is now part of the UNESCO Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site. Thanks to National Lottery players, this funding will ensure its story continues to inspire and connect people.

The railway's main hub is at Pendre, including the original locomotive shed, which was built in 1866 and continues to house the line's original Fletcher Jennings locomotives (and





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**An aerial view of the site at Pendre, which is set to be redeveloped thanks to a £3.7 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help ensure the railway has the facilities it needs to survive another 75 years.** OWEN HAYWARD



**GWR small prairie No. 5552 climbs past Charlie's Gate between Bodmin Parkway and Bodmin General with a demonstration freight train during the Bodmin Railway's December 29 Winter Warm Up.** JON HIRD/BR

others) to this day. The main building is supplemented by additional carriage sheds, some of which are now in need of replacement, while the engineering workshops are in need of more space to provide a more ergonomical working environment.

The redevelopment will see new carriage storage built incorporating dedicated maintenance facilities, including a paint shop that will be usable all year round (the current one being a part of one of the existing running sheds which gets used to accommodate strengthened carriage rakes in the peak season).

The railway's locomotive shed and workshop will also be refurbished and made regularly accessible to visitors.

Meanwhile, facilities at Tywyn Wharf will see the railway's popular café expanded across the lower floor of the station building to improve its capacity, with the main entrance being relocated from the lower platform level to a new accessible street-level one.

Finally, volunteer accommodation will be improved with the refurbishment of Trefri, a five-bedroom mock-Tudor house next to the station which was once the home of Edward Thomas, who started with the original railway in 1897 and served as both manager and a director with the company before retiring in 1967.

This aspect will incorporate accessible sleeping accommodation and washroom facilities, along with meeting rooms and offices to enable railway administration activities to be moved out of Tywyn Wharf's station buildings, thus offering more space for public facilities there.With sustainability a core part of the redevelopment plan, many of these will incorporate green energy measures such as solar panels, insulation and biodiversity initiatives that will help reduce the railway's operating costs and environmental impact.

A new community hub will offer schools and local groups opportunities to explore heritage through bilingual interpretation and accessible facilities, helping to inspire learning, foster cultural understanding and create a welcoming space for everyone to connect with the local railway history. Furthermore, additional apprenticeship schemes will help the railway train up a new generation of skilled staff to help feed the heritage railway sector, further ensuring that they continue to operate long into the future.

Andrew White, director of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Wales, said: "We are delighted to support the Talyllyn Railway, a much-loved heritage attraction that holds a special place in the story of Wales.

"Thanks to National Lottery players, this funding will help preserve its unique history and ensure future generations can continue to enjoy and learn from this remarkable site."

## Delightful news

Talyllyn Railway Company chairman David Ventry added: "Obviously, we are overjoyed at this news. I am particularly delighted for the team who worked so hard to put this bid together, especially our development manager, Nick Broster, and that their dedicated work has now reaped its reward. The bid faced many challenges, not least the huge rise in construction costs that has taken place over the past few years, and we are very grateful to the NLHF for backing this project through all the changes that have had to be made.

"The tremendous response to our 75 Appeal, currently standing at well over £500,000 in donations and pledges, has also been key to this successful outcome."

Liz Porrett, general manager (operations) said: "This is tremendous news and we would like to thank the NLHF for recognising the need for this project.

"The team would also like to say thank-you for the fantastic support from our members, visitors, and all those who have donated to our appeal or supported the project in anyway.

"We are now looking forward to our 75th anniversary celebrations as the world's first volunteer-run preserved railway with real optimism that the Railway will have the facilities it needs for the next 75 years"

Following the news of the successful grant application, the railway will soon begin to tender for contracts for the work involved with aims to get the project under way as soon as possible.

In the meantime, further donations to help realise the full ambition can still be made by visiting www.talyllyn.co.uk/75appeal

The TR will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in May with a special celebration for invited guests on its Founders' Day on May 14 (the date of the first train in 1951), before commencing with a three-day gala that will recreate some of the key moments from its preservation history.

Furthermore, heritage railways and museums are being encouraged to celebrate their volunteers throughout 2026 in recognition of all the efforts of those who have kept the sector alive throughout the past 75 years, without which many would likely have either failed or never even been started.

**Left: Heavy snow is uncommon at the Talyllyn Railway, particularly where it lasts several days. Following heavy snowfall, on January 4 local volunteers arranged an impromptu photographic charter with Fletcher Jennings 0-4-2ST No.1 *Tallylyn* (the line's oldest locomotive) and a small mixed train that included wagons freshly repainted by the young members' group.** NATHAN SPENCE

# 5-BEL Trust issues update on 'Brighton Belle' restoration

THE highly anticipated debut of the restored 'Brighton Belle' EMU edges ever closer, with commissioning runs expected to commence soon.

In a recent update, the 5-BEL Trust has advised that the unit, which is currently at Crewe being worked on by Locomotive Services Limited, has been having its footsteps repositioned to make it as gauge-friendly as possible for use on the national network.

Following this, it was due to be laser-scanned by Hitachi Rail to create an accurate digital model that will enable it to be cleared to operate on as many routes as possible.

"In terms of testing the third rail equipment, Merseyrail advised that the third rail testing line on Chester depot has been decommissioned," a spokesperson said. "This led LSL to open dialogue with Alstom at Litchurch Lane, in Derby, which recently hosted The Greatest Gathering as part of Rail 200. It has a purpose-built test track for third rail vehicles which will allow the train to be tested in controlled conditions with no operational activities to impede the work. Alstom has kindly agreed to host a full day of testing."

Independently of the wider gauging process mentioned, Hitachi has also agreed to carry out a specific gauge clearance exercise for the Brighton Belle to move to Litchurch Lane using existing kinematic data, which, although not as accurate as that which the new model will be, should be sufficient to allow the train to get to Derby and back, particularly as a wide range of unusual vehicles were cleared to access Derby for The Greatest Gathering.

"LSL was expected to be submitting the documentation to Network Rail for approval to move in mid-November, with an aim to be testing in Derby before the end of the 2025 or very early in 2026 at the latest," the spokesperson added. As this issue went to press, the EMU had not yet left Crewe.

# Bulleid and Castle booked for Worth Valley gala

THE Keighley & Worth Valley Railway will welcome two main line locomotives to its March 19-22 spring steam gala.

Swapping the English Riviera for Bronte country, GWR 4-6-0 No. 5029 *Nunney Castle* will head to Yorkshire for the occasion, due to arrive via the main line connection at Keighley station. Returned to steam in the spring of 2025 following its most recent overhaul, it made its first heritage line gala appearance at the West Somerset Railway's October 17-19 autumn steam gala.

While there, it will be joined by SR West Country 4-6-2 No. 34046 *Braunton*. This visit will be the first time a Bulleid light Pacific has run on the Worth Valley since October 2016, when No. 34053 *Sir Keith Park* (then based at Swanage but now resident on the Spa Valley Railway) visited for the autumn steam gala. The railway was also once home to No. 34092 *City of Wells*; in May 2015, when being transported to the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway for its annual Cotswold Festival of Steam, it was found to exceed the maximum permitted weight (72 tons) owing to its boiler still being full of water at a weight check on the M62.

Concerns about its structural condition resulted in Bradford Metropolitan District Council subsequently imposing a weight limit of 44 tons on a river bridge outside Ingrow West station, preventing the locomotive from returning there. Instead, it went to the East Lancashire Railway, which later purchased the locomotive, while the bridge was later found to be excellent condition and so the restriction was lifted.

## Main line stalwarts

Both locomotives are part of the Locomotive Services Limited's main line fleet and can often be seen on railtours, with *Nunney Castle* having spent the majority of last year based at Bishops Lydeard, on the West Somerset Railway, from where it took over railtours destined for Kingswear on the Dartmouth Steam Railway. With road movements requiring an expensive police escort into and out of Ingrow, both of these visitors will arrive via the main line connection at Keighley station.

Up to seven locomotives will also be in action drawn from the KWVR's home fleet, with the railway promising a timetable that will include goods trains, double-heading and more. For details, see kwvr.co.uk/events/thesteamgala

# Midland double 'firsts' for *Flying Scotsman*

**By Robin Jones**

LNER A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* is to break new ground with two bookings for Midlands-based events in the weeks ahead.

During February half-term, the legendary locomotive will head an early run of Vintage Trains' annual 'Shakespeare Express' series from Birmingham to Stratford-upon-Avon and back.

Valentine's Day, Saturday February 14, will offer the first-ever opportunity to ride behind *Scotsman* from Birmingham city centre.

The day will see it haul three return 'Valentine's Shakespeare Express' services, providing a two-hour express train experience, with the option of either brunch, afternoon tea or a three-course evening dinner in authentic luxury Pullman cars or seating in tourist class cars with large picture windows by every seat.

During the following school half-term, on Wednesday 18th, Thursday 19th and Friday 20th, *Scotsman* will haul five one-hour train rides daily from Birmingham Moor Street station. Tickets are strictly limited and are available on a first-come first-served basis only by booking at vintagetrains.co.uk

## To the Great Central

At the end of May, *Scotsman* will again visit the region, making a first-ever visit to the Great Central Railway (Nottingham).

The A3 will haul 80-minute services along the line from Ruddington Fields on May 23, 24, 25, 30 and 31. On these trains, visitors can choose between private compartments, open seating and – in another innovation for the railway – a restored inspection saloon once used by senior engineers and officials. Visitors will also be able to experience the footplate, enjoy afternoon teas and/or celebration evening dinners in the presence of the A3 throughout the month, including half-term, on May 20/21 and 26-28 at the Ruddington site. *Scotsman* will also be on display at the GCR(N)'s Model Railway exhibition on May 16/17.



**A3 Pacific No.6013 *Flying Scotsman* is seen entering Newcastle, 150 minutes late with its first main line tour of 2025, UK Railtours' 'The Festive Flying Scotsman' on December 14. Problems with the coaching stock coupling at York was the cause of the delay, and on eventually reaching Newcastle, the train returned to York and Finsbury Park almost immediately behind DB Cargo Class 67 No. 67007, leaving *Flying Scotsman* and its support coach in Platform 2 at Newcastle. The A3 ran round the support coach via Platform 3, before running tender first to Tyne Yard for servicing prior to returning to York, where it spent Christmas on display at the National Railway Museum. Hauled by the diesel, the tour arrived back at Finsbury Park only six minutes later than planned.** DAVID GILLIS

The visit has been hailed as the centrepiece of the nine-mile railway's relaunch following several years of non-operation earlier in the 2020s and has been arranged in partnership with Fox & Edwards Events.

As reported last issue, the GCR(N) has recently completed the installation of a new 65ft-long locomotive servicing pit as the line gears up to operating more steam services.

GCR(N) chairman Andy Fillingham said: "We are thrilled to be welcoming *Flying Scotsman* back to the East Midlands, 25 years since it last operated on a heritage railway in our region.

"We are very proud of the work of our volunteers in reopening the railway to visitors and this should bring awareness of our superb attraction to new people. Fox & Edwards are a brilliant partner for us so it's positive to work together with them."

## Strong partnerships

Oliver Edwards, director and general manager of Fox & Edwards Events, said "This is an internationally renowned locomotive which we are delighted to be hosting for this celebration on a wonderful railway.

"*Flying Scotsman* is an incredible machine from the golden age of steam and it will delight visitors during its time with us. Our work in the heritage railway sector is making a real difference."

➜ **Full details are available and tickets can now be bought at www.foxandedwards.com/events/view/flying-scotsman-legendary-journeys-nottinghamshire**

# *Scotsman* to visit Mid-Hants and East Lancs

PRIOR to its appearance at the Great Central Railway (Nottingham), *Flying Scotsman* will make a return visit to the Mid-Hants Railway in March, followed by the East Lancashire Railway in June.

Its visit to the MHR will span the dates of March 10-21 and will see the A3 hauling services on the line on March 13-15 and 20/21, with breakfast and afternoon tea options also available. Static footplate access days will take place on March 10-12 and 17-19, plus an evening photography session is scheduled to take place on March 11.

The A3 will be hauling its ELR passenger services on June 5-7 and 13/14, boarding at Bury Bolton Street station and running non-stop along the line. No. 60103 will then be on static display on June 3/4 and June 10-12.

On June 5/6 and 13, No. 60103 will haul a luxury dining train. Guests will be greeted with live music on arrival and a welcoming drink. Once seated, they will have a premium four-course silver service meal, served as the train glides through the scenic Irwell Valley.



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**New-build GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange* leads visiting GWR 4-6-0 No. 4079 *Pendennis Castle* towards Gotherington station on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway on January 4.** JOHN TITLOW

# Fragrant finale to the Stockton & Darlington bicentenary celebrations

PERFUME, a sound and light immersive installation by an internationally acclaimed French artist Yann Ngeuma, will be the final event in the celebration of the bicentenary of the world's first modern railway.

The exhibition at Preston Park Museum in Stockton-on-Tees, the last in the Tracks of Change exhibition, will explore the surprising role that railways play in the natural world, from seed distribution to aiding pollination.

Opening on January 17, the installation inside the museum's new exhibition space, The Spence Building, will see visitors surrounded by gentle waves of colour and light, accompanied by the rhythm of a soundtrack composed by Zero Gr4vity, creating hypnotic poetic landscapes full of petals, pollen, and nature. Known worldwide for transforming spaces with light and sound, this is the first time Yann Nguema's work has been shown in the UK

Following a multi-million-pound extension and investment into wider park improvements, Preston Park has been showcasing a range of railway-related exhibitions in the museum's space.

S&DR200 festival director Niccy Hallifax said: "S&DR200 is about bringing the heritage and stories to life in a unique and special way, and just like the installations before, this one is special.

"It showcases the science behind pollination in the most evocative way, and as importantly, is starkly in contrast to the other works we have installed in this newly created space."

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council cabinet member for leisure and culture, Coun Nigel Cooke, said that tens of thousands of people had already visited Preston Mark Museum since the doors



**The Perfume exhibition inside The Spence Building at Preston Park Museum will highlight how railways help nature.** SOTBC

opened in September. "It's clear that people have been truly inspired by the impact of S&DR200," he said.

"We are expecting Perfume to be just as popular, with people keen to discover the international significance of our railway heritage through these incredible exhibitions.

"It's another example of how we are able to showcase the Tees Valley on an international stage and save people the cost of travelling far and wide to enjoy different cultural experiences."

# Poetry in (loco)motion: LNER celebrates S&DR bicentenary

IN partnership with Stockton & Darlington 200, LNER has launched a specially commissioned poem and video to mark the bicentenary of the world's first modern train.

Written by Darlington poet Lizzie Lovejoy, We Will Carry You˜weaves together themes of connection, community and journeys.

To accompany the poem, LNER has also commissioned a short film by North Yorkshire-based videographer Alex Brown, bringing Lizzie's words to life and capturing the spirit, heritage, and human stories of rail travel past and present.

The video also reflects on LNER's partnership with Bradford as UK City of Culture 2025, and the launch this year of additional services to and from the city, highlighting rail's role in connecting people with culture and opportunity.

LNER has played a central role in Railway 200, honouring the legacy of the Stockton & Darlington Railway while showcasing the continuing impact of rail on communities today.

Highlights have included the unveiling of a commemorative livery on one of LNER's Azumas. LNER also proudly welcomed the replica of *Locomotion No. 1* into Darlington station as part of celebrations to mark the bicentenary.

S&DR200 festival director Niccy Halifax said: "This poem is a wonderful expression of the spirit of S&DR200 – reflecting on where we've come from, celebrating the creativity and communities rail has inspired, and looking ahead to the journeys still to come. S&DR200 would also like to thank our wonderful partner in LNER for the work they have done, not just on the celebrations but for their year-round support."

To listen to the poem and watch the video, visit https://youtu.be/ST5Sg4SZoik



**Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 4289 *Fred* heads around the curve at Congerstone foot crossing on the Battlefield Line, with the 11am Mince Pie Special from Shackerstone on December 31.** GRAHAM NUTTALL


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**Llangollen Railway volunteer Malcolm Lees, who was the railway's last BR era footplateman and who retired on December 31, 2025.** OLIVER LANG/LR

## Llangollen gives its thanks as line's final BR steam driver retires

**By Owen Hayward**

A YEAR of celebration for the Llangollen Railway concluded on a slightly more sombre note when one of its steam crew, whose career began with BR, worked his final driving turn on the heritage line.

A highly respected and long-serving volunteer, Malcolm Lees was widely regarded as the LR's last steam era footplateman. During his career with the Western Region, he was based out of Shrewsbury and Bescot depots, although he never made it to the grade of driver, before later becoming synonymous with Llangollen during the heritage era.

Throughout 2025, the LR celebrated its 50th anniversary, and Malcolm drove his last services on the final day of the year, bringing to a close not only a remarkable personal contribution but also an outstanding season for the railway. Marking the occasion, volunteers, colleagues and supporters gathered throughout the day to thank Malcolm for his dedication, culminating in the presentation of a painting of the railway he has helped shape for generations.

Speaking on his final day, Malcolm said: "It has been a huge privilege to be part of this railway for so many years. The people here are like family, and the railway itself gets under your skin. I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved together and grateful for the friendships, memories, and moments along the way."

### Valued volunteer

Former LR Chief Mechanical Engineer and founding volunteer Dave Owen also paid tribute to Malcolm's long railway career, saying: "He started at Salop as a cleaner in about the mid-1960s, reached the position of fireman, but was made redundant with the switch to dieselisation. I first knew him in the mid-1990s when he started at Llangollen as a cleaner, quickly moving to fireman, and later to driver. His progression reflected both his ability and his dedication."

The final day of service was marked by a real party atmosphere, with hundreds of people turning out to see the trains depart the picturesque station and to celebrate Malcolm's contribution.

Trust manager David Hennigan said: "Malcolm represents the very best of this railway. He has been our last link to the steam era footplate, and I am personally grateful for his help, knowledge, and advice. His final day was a fitting celebration, not just of one man's contribution, but of a railway powered by volunteers who care deeply about what they do.

"We will be launching our 2026 season soon, and we do so from a position of strength and optimism."

# Clearance of Welsh Highland pre-Christmas landslip commences

**By Robin Jones**

REMOVAL of landslide debris which blocked the Welsh Highland Railway and caused its Christmas services from Caernarfon to be shortened was due to start in January.

The landslide near Tryfan Junction, 4 1/2 miles from Caernarfon, saw trees and about 100 cubic metres of mud deposited on the line on the morning of December 18 during intense localised rainstorms that had prompted weather warnings. The extent of the slippage was revealed during a full inspection of the railway that had been planned prior to the operation of festive season services.

Santa train services from Caernarfon the following weekend went ahead as planned but over a shortened route, and scheduled trains to Rhyd Ddu between Christmas and the new year were not possible.

Following a site inspection by engineers and geotechnical consultants, the railway's management formulated an appropriate plan of action.

Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway director and general manager Paul Lewin said: "The landslip occurred in a location close to a river which has seen land movements historically. When the railway was rebuilt in this area, it was strengthened to better protect it.

"Early indications are that this worked effectively, but that has not prevented a torrent of slurry, like mud, from being deposited on the line during the intense rainstorm. It is pleasing to note that our safety inspection regime identified the problem promptly before any trains operated in the area in North Wales.



**Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway director and general manager Paul Lewin, speaking in front of the landslip.** FF&WHR

"Persistent heavy rain over recent weeks has caused a number of similar incidents in the area, including the widely reported example on the coast at nearby Nefyn."

He said that following the inspections, contractors will remove the spoil debris so the full extent of any damage could be assessed to enable the line to be reopened.

The railway will work with the geotechnical engineers to draw up a new plan to make the section of line safe for the future and works trains may run in January. "It will probably involve taking up a few panels of track because the ballast is so badly fouled with silt that if we were to leave it, it could cause problems in the future," he said.




**Having been visiting from the Great Central Railway to work the Nene Valley Railway's festive services, BR 2MT No. 78019 passes Longueville Junction near Orton Mere on January 4, 2026.** HAYDEN SHEPPARD



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# Farewell to last High Speed Trains in regular service

DOZENS of spectators turned out to watch the final trip made by a Great Western Railway InterCity 125 High Speed Train as the Castle class was withdrawn after 49 years of service.

The last service was a round trip specially laid on from Plymouth to Penzance on December 31 in anticipation of extra public interest. The trip was hauled by Class 43s Nos. 43198/093 and called at Par only, while other services on the last day ran from Exeter St Davids to Penzance and Par to Newquay.

Introduced in 1976, the iconic HSTs, comprising Class 43 power cars and Mk. 3 coaches, were the mainstay of InterCity services across the country. However, following the introduction of the InterCity Express Trains, these 'two and eight' formation trains stopped operating on long-distance GWR routes in May 2019 before being refurbished to support regional services between Cardiff and Penzance.

GWR rebuilt a core of 24 power cars and 48 Mk. 3 coaches into shorter 'two and four' formations, informally known as the Castle class, with each power car carrying the name of a local fortress and adapted with modern automatic doors and compliant toilets. GWR's Luke Farley told the BBC: "There aren't many people that don't remember catching one to London or a day out on the seaside. There is no other train, really, that has had the sort of emotional buy-in by both passengers who have travelled on it and the crews and the colleagues who have worked on them and maintained them and driven them over the years."

The withdrawn 125 sets are being returned to owners Angel Trains or First Rail Holdings Limited. It was unclear whether they will be sold for export or purposes.

A total of 19 Class 43 power cars have currently been saved for heritage use. The National Railway Museum in York saved No. 43002, the first production power car, while the Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board nominated No. 43102 (43302) for preservation as holder of the record for being the world's fastest diesel locomotive, with 148.5mph recorded on a test run. It was donated to the NRM when withdrawn from service in May 2021 and is located at the Locomotion museum at Shildon.

Elsewhere, Porterbrook donated Nos. 43048 and 43089 to the 125 Group when the lease with East Midlands Railway, and the group later also obtained Nos. 43044 and 43159 from Porterbrook, the latter being donated in June that year. Locomotive Services Limited has saved Nos. 43046, 43047, 43049, 43055, 43058, 43059 and 43083 and three sets of Mk. 3 coaches for excursion trains, Nos. 43046 and 43055 being refurbished and reliveried, along with a set of coaches, as a recreation of the Midland Pullman.



**One of the last HST Castle class services leaves Dawlish on December 11.** LAURA STANDERWICK

# Aln Valley marks six decades since last steam on the branch

**By Robin Jones**

THE Aln Valley Railway is to commemorate 60 years since the end of steam on the Alnwick branch with a special event on June 20/21.

In service will be the appropriately numbered Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST NCB No. 60, which was delivered new in January 1949 to the National Coal Board for the Lambton Railway, Philadelphia, County Durham. The cab was modified to allow the locomotive to work through narrow tunnels to coal staithes at Sunderland, and may be the only surviving steam locomotive with this modification.

Bought in June 1976 by Stephen Wood, it was moved to the Strathspey and returned to steam in 1980 following a heavy overhaul at Ian Storey's workshop at Hepscott, near Morpeth. There, the heavy overhaul and boiler repairs were completed, and No. 60 arrived on long-term loan to the AVR in 2018.

The event will also include a goods train with passengers carried in two brake vans during the day, as well as a train of passenger stock.

Class 11 0-6-0DE No. 12088 *Shirley*, which entered traffic on June 16, 1951, will celebrate its 75th birthday on July 4/5.

*Shirley* emerged from Derby Works wearing a coat of black paint, much as it appears today. It worked for BR at Aston, near Birmingham, then later at Rugby, Bletchley, Springs Branch (in Wigan) and Allerton, from where it was taken out of service in May 1971.

After a period of storage, it was transferred to the ownership of Johnsons (Chopwell) Ltd and used at the National Coal Board Opencast Executive site at Swalwell. By July 1989, it was with the South Yorkshire Preservation Society at Sheffield, before returning to Johnsons for work at Widdrington Coal Disposal Point in Northumberland. After transfer to Butterwell Disposal Point, it moved to Lionheart in December 2012.

Cab ride tickets will be available, as well as a limited number of mugs and T-shirts. On the Saturday evening, a photographers' special will leave Lionheart at 5pm. The weekend will also include a chat with the diesel traction team about *Shirley*, and there will be a photographic board showing its rolling restoration. It recently underwent an extensive overhaul and restoration which included the installation of vacuum brakes, allowing it to haul passenger trains.

The AVR hopes to have Peckett W6-S class 0-4-0ST No. 1967 of 1939 *J. Fuller Eberle*, previously known as *Merlin/Myrddin*, back in steam shortly following the fitting of its tanks. Built for use at Bristol United Gas Company's Stapleton Road Gasworks, it has a dropped cab and lower profile to enable it to move coal under structures with tight clearances and a short wheelbase so it can negotiate tight curves.

From new, the locomotive carried the name *J. Fuller Eberle* in honour of Alderman James Fuller Eberle, a key figure in setting up the gas works, who died in the year the locomotive was built. It first ran under its own steam in the heritage era in March 1979 at the Gwili Railway, where it was renamed *Merlin*, and was later based at the Derwent Valley Light Railway, Bowes Railway and Weardale Railway. In November 2022, the locomotive was moved to the AVR.

Following its overhaul, the locomotive will be tried out with two Mk. 1 carriages on the curved, steep gradient linking the former alignment of the Alnwick-Alnmouth branch with Lionheart station.

AVR president Michael Proctor said that any long-term agreement for the locomotive to be based at Lionheart will follow the completion of the overhaul and is pending the results of the tests.



**Peckett W6-S class 0-4-0ST No. 1967 *J. Fuller Eberle*.** AVR

# A trio of Manors for West Somerset's golden anniversary gala celebration

**By Owen Hayward**

THE West Somerset Railway will celebrate its 50th anniversary in style this May with the promise of a trio of GWR/WR Manor 4-6-0s following the announcement that No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* will head back to the region for the majority of the line's 2026 operating season.

Owned by the Erlestoke Manor Fund, whose flagship No. 7812 is already on long-term loan to the line, *Bradley Manor* (picture, page 19) will depart the Severn Valley Railway in April and work on the WSR until November, when it will return to Bridgnorth in time for the SVR's festive trains and January 2027 winter steam gala. The temporary move comes following mutual discussions between the EMF and SVR about making the best use of the recently overhauled locomotive, and so all its contracted steamings will be condensed into the start and end of the season to facilitate this loan.

An EMF statement said: "Having both locomotives at the WSR gives opportunities for a planned Friends Reunited event on Saturday, July 4 and the EMF annual general meeting at Minehead the following day; details of both will follow to shareholders in due course.

"With the availability of both locomotives for service trains, the success of the double-header with Nos. 7802 and 7812 at the SVR spring gala in April 2025 could be replicated by the same locomotives at the WSR in July.

"The EMF wishes to record its thanks to the SVR for condensing the agreed 2026 days into the start and end of the year to allow the hire of No. 7802 to take place."

*Bradley Manor* and *Erlestoke Manor* will be supported by the WSR's resident fleet, including classmate No. 7828 *Odney Manor*, with the trio all scheduled to star at the line's 50th anniversary gala on May 1-4.

"The Manors could be considered the most important class in the WSR history, with seven of the nine examples having worked on the line in preservation," a WSR spokesman said. "The first of these was indeed *Bradley Manor* in 1994.

"In fact, the class was banned from the Minehead branch in the steam era, therefore the locomotive was the first of its class to make it to the seaside resort. It is fair to say, therefore, that *Bradley Manor* holds an important part in WSR history and is a perfect engine to visit for our 50th birthday celebrations, setting the standard for what would become the regular ideal motive power for the modern preserved line."




**WR 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor*, near Woolston, on the West Somerset Railway, on March 25, 2023.** WSR

# Steam giants booked for spring and autumn steam weekends

TWO of the biggest named heritage steam locomotives have been announced for events at opposite ends of the 2026 gala season.

Back for the third consecutive year, the East Lancashire Railway's Legends of Steam has seen appearances from the likes of LNER A4 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and BR Standard Class 7 No. 70000 *Britannia* take starring roles. However, topping the bill for 2026 will be Peppercorn A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado*, which will be visiting on April 10-12.

Not long having returned to steam following a lengthy overhaul, the A1 was booked to appear at the ELR's March 2025 event, but the need to address teething problems discovered during testing at the Nene Valley Railway in the weeks beforehand meant it had to withdraw from the gala line-up at short notice. It was replaced by LNER B1 4-6-0 No. 61306 *Mayflower*, which arrived partway through the first day, as reported in issue 331.

Further details, including the announcement of an additional visiting locomotive, were still to be confirmed as this issue went to press. It is expected that that SR West Country class No. 34092 *City of Wells* will appear, although it will be without fellow Bulleid light Pacific No. 34081 *92 Squadron*, which is due to enter Ian Riley's workshops imminently to undergo overhaul following firebox issues being discovered that necessitated its removal from service during 2025.

Meanwhile, the Bluebell Railway has announced that unique BR Standard Class 8 No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* will headline for the line's annual Giants of Steam gala on October 16-18.

"With its impressive presence and remarkable story, *Duke of Gloucester* promises to add real excitement to the Giants of Steam weekend," said a Bluebell statement.

An additional locomotive is also being negotiated.

Currently set to be No. 71000's first visit to a heritage line since completing its own overhaul in May 2025, there has been speculation that it might appear before then at the Severn Valley Railway's April 16-19 spring steam gala, the arrangement being common practice between the SVR and Locomotive Services Limited, which often uses the heritage line to conduct running-in trials. A SVR spokesman said the line had not yet signed agreements for any locomotives to appear at its spring steam gala, adding: "We are pursuing options and will make announcements as soon as we have signed contracts in place."

# STEAM'S Real Deal

FORMER Bargain Hunt presenter David Dickinson and his team of antique dealers are to visit STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway on Saturday, January 17 to film a new episode for Dickinson's Real Deals.

The public are invited to bring along their antiques, collectables, and hidden treasures to find out what they are worth. The free event runs from 8am until 5pm, and visitors have no obligation to sell anything they bring for valuation.



**Left: West Country light Pacific No. 34082 *Eddystone* heads the Railway Touring Company's railtour from Three Bridges to Bath and Bristol on December 13. No. 34028 was taken off at Salisbury on the return leg to enable its return to the Swanage Railway.** ALAN HOLDING



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LMS 'Black Five' 4-6-0 No. 44871 crosses Beggars Bridge at Turvey with the Railway Touring Company's 'The Christmas White Rose' from York to Cambridge on December 17. PETER FOSTER

# Big push for Victorian new-build's boiler fundraiser

THE GCR 567 Locomotive Group has launched a £160,000 fundraising appeal to finance the construction of the new-build locomotive's boiler, with sights set on having this major component completed in 2028 and the locomotive operational two years after that.

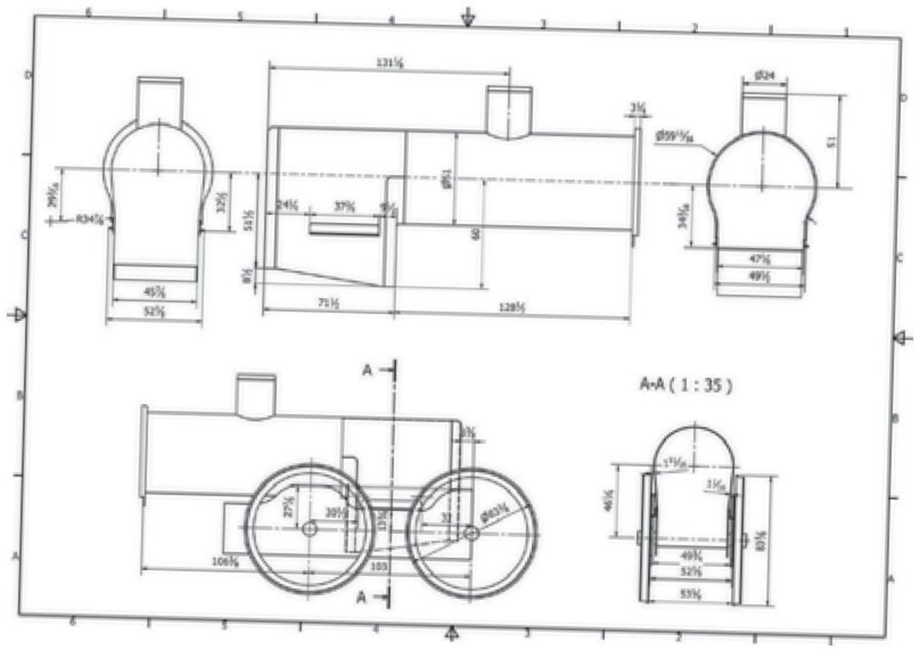
The group is looking to revive one of the Great Central Railway's long-lost Class 2 4-4-0s , the first of which was introduced in 1890 and derived from a Thomas Parker design built by Kitson Works in 1887 for the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway.

Under the LNER, they became the D7 class, but none passed into BR ownership, with the last example withdrawn in 1939. As such, the GCR567LG was set up to construct a replica of No. 567, which was the final example of the first batch of six locomotives built in 1890.

To date, several major components have already been manufactured, including the locomotive's frames and driving wheels, with an original GCR tender also having been acquired. The latter is currently in the shed at Loughborough Central on the GCR heritage line where it is currently being stripped down to the frames for refurbishment to be carried out. In the meantime, the group is now looking to place the order for the locomotive's boiler as the project gathers momentum.



**The ex-GCR tender saw the life-expired tank dismantled at Loughborough as the frames and chassis are readied for refurbishment.** ANDREW HORROCKS-TAYLOR/GCR567LG




**Early design sketches by Israel Newton give an impression of what the new boiler for No. 567 might appear.** GCR567LG

## Major element

Described as "the last major element of the locomotive," the group is looking to raise £160,000 to fund its design and construction, which is to be contracted out to respected boiler manufacturers Israel Newton.

A group spokesman said: "The boiler design is a saturated type and so is similar to that of an Austerity 0-6-0ST design, meaning many standard parts can be utilised in the barrel.

"The firebox is a deeper design and reflects the early MSLR/Kitson practice but will be in steel as is modern practice. Tubes are a topic, with the Austerities only needing 190 to steam freely, the Class 2's had 233 tubes. The new No. 567 may compromise on 222 tubes for a more recognisable tube plate pattern. An estimated £250,000 is required to complete the locomotive; successfully raising £50,000 during each of the next five years would enable us to complete the project in 2030."

Several sponsorship opportunities are available to help, with firebox side stays available for £50 each, crown stays £75 and boiler tubes costing £100 each. To donate, visit www.justgiving.com/campaign/gcr567boiler

# Somerset & Dorset revivalists set their sights on the south

THE North Dorset Railway is in talks about extending its running line by 1¼ miles.

As reported last issue, the heritage line ran the first train over Lamb House Bridge in nearly 60 years on November 22. The railway, based at Shillingstone, stand currently has half a mile of track.

In a new year message to supporters, chairman Gavin Collins said that the group was now in consultation with Dorset Council about extending south of the station to Holloway Lane and talking with them about acquiring some land for restoration and storage sheds.

He said that work was continuing to get the newly-rebuilt quarter-mile line ready for brake van rides, which would require approval from the Office of Rail and Road.

He said that the railway was also in the planning and a fundraising phase for a £200,000 restoration shed to replace a temporary shelter on the site.

# Mid-Hants 'sprints' into a new era of rail with arrival of latest DMU

**By Owen Hayward**

THE Mid-Hants Railway has become the first UK heritage line to welcome Class 150 DMU into its fleet, the unit arriving just in time for Christmas.

No. 150231 was donated by Porterbrook at the start of Alstom's The Greatest Gathering last August, and it will enable the railway to improve its current timetables by offering an earlier departure from Alton, where heritage services meets main line trains from Waterloo.

Built in 1987, the Class 150 is part of the 'Sprinter' family, a new generation of trains introduced by BR in the 1980s to replace first-generation DMUs, which had themselves first appeared in the 1950s and 1960s and deemed too uneconomical to refurbish.

BR looked at two styles of trains, one being the lightweight four-wheeled railbus style 'Pacer' type (which predominantly used bus technology), while the second was a more substantial DMU that could operate longer-distance services and relied on longer bogied vehicles. The latter were branded as the 'Sprinters' and consisted of Classes 150, 153, 155, 156, and 158. The biggest obvious change was the move away from the traditional slam doors to the now-common power sliding doors.

Although the MHR is home to a Class 205 'Thumper' DEMU, it is currently awaiting overhaul to bring it back into service; as such, during 2025, the railway's timetable meant the first departure off of Alton was not until 11.50am. Recognising the need for an earlier train to serve those arriving via national rail services, the railway seized the opportunity to welcome the Class 150 into its collection not only to fulfil this operational need, but to also see a different era of rail travel represented in preservation. Had the line between Alton and Alresford remained open beyond 1973, the 'Thumpers' would have been replaced by more modern units which may well have included 'Sprinters.'

Delivered new to Manchester's Newton Heath depot in February 1987, No. 150231 passed into Regional Railways Central ownership in 1992 under BR's sectorisation. Two years later, it then transferred to BR Anglia (Norwich) for regional services and in September 1994 was named *King Edmund* at Bury St. Edmunds station. Apart from a spell with Silverlink Trains in April 2004, the unit remained at Norwich until May 2005 when it moved initially to Central Trains and then onto Arriva Trains Wales in November 2007, with which it saw out its remaining years before being withdrawn on July 9, 2025, when it worked the 6.35pm from Shrewsbury to Swansea.

## Heading for home

Unveiled in its original 1987 BR livery at Derby during The Greatest Gathering, its move south had been held up while awaiting route clearance. On December 23, it finally set out for its new home, travelling under its own power to Alton, where it arrived at 3.28pm, from where it continued to the main engineering depot at Ropley later that evening.

Rebecca Dalley, CEO of the Watercress Line, said: "We are delighted to welcome this iconic unit to our fleet. Since our Class 205 Hampshire Unit came out of service in 2004, we have been looking for an opportunity to fill in the service for our visitors from the Alton and London end of the Watercress Line.

"We hope to start restoration of the 1959 Hampshire Unit for it to be our mainstay for the Alton service, with this Class 150 in support. With the Class 150 joining our fleet and the restoration of the Hampshire Unit planned, we can once again provide a service that connects perfectly with our steam-hauled trains."

Stefan Rose, chief investment officer at Porterbrook, said: "The Watercress Line is a fitting new home for this Class 150 unit that has served communities reliably for decades.

"We are proud that this train will continue to be enjoyed by the public and play a role in educating future generations about the UK's railway heritage."

"It's extraordinary to think that more time has passed since the Class 150 entered service than between the building of SR Merchant Navy No. 35005 *Canadian Pacific* and the reopening of the Watercress Line," added trustee and Alton resident Jonathan Morris. "My children can enjoy this train today, and in years to come they will see it preserved as part of living railway history.

"We are hugely grateful to Porterbrook for its generosity and to The Greatest Gathering team for restoring it to its original livery."

Once volunteer crews have been trained and passed to work the Sprinter, it will enter service during 2026. To celebrate the arrival of No. 150231, the Watercress Line Heritage Railway Trust is launching a new supporters' scheme, The 150 Club, to help fund its ongoing restoration, maintenance and the long-term care of this important unit, ensuring it remains part of the working heritage fleet for future generations. To join the club, visit watercressline.beaconforms.com/form/33945634




**Class 150 Sprinter No. 150231 running into Alton platform 3.** JEREMY DE SOUZA/MHR




**A perfect Christmas gift: No. 150231 sits in the loop at Alton following its arrival on the MHR on December 23.** JAMES PAICE/MHR



# *Hengist* gets its roller bearings

SIX roller bearings for the coupled wheels of new-build BR Standard Class 6 Pacific No. 72010 *Hengist* have been delivered to its construction base at CTL Seal, Sheffield. The £44,000 bearings were supplied by Dudley-based Timken UK Ltd and represent the first delivery of three major orders placed for the locomotive's coupled wheelsets. The tyres are scheduled to arrive in January and the axles in April.

**Left: The six new roller bearings for Hengist.** SSLCL

The next major procurement will be the castings for the cannon boxes, planned for the spring.

The Standard Steam Locomotive Company Ltd's Hengist Project chairman, Andy England, said: "The arrival of these bearings represents another important step forward.

"They will be fitted to the cast steel coupled wheels generously donated by Sir Andrew Cook,



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# Great exchanges for Western spring galas

TWO former GWR routes will be sharing their locomotives for a pair of steam galas to help evoke memories of branch line days of old.

First off, Llangollen Railway resident 0-6-0PT No. 7754 is due to appear at the East Somerset Railway's spring steam weekend on March 14/15.

Built by the North British Locomotive Company in 1930, No. 7754 is regarded as the LR Trust's flagship locomotive. Withdrawn by BR in 1959, it was sold to the National Coal Board, following which it was first employed at Talywain Colliery in South Wales, later being moved to Mountain Ash colliery.

The last of its class in industrial service, it was retired in 1975 after blowing off a cylinder cover, after which it was donated to the National Museum of Wales. The museum then placed it on permanent loan to the LR before later transferring ownership to the trust. Its most recent overhaul saw it return to steam in October 2022 (although it did not run in revenue-earning service until the following year), and its holiday to Somerset will be the first time since then that it has left the railway.

Originally a broad gauge line when built, in 1874 the ESR route was sold to the GWR and rebuilt as standard gauge. Quarrying was (and still is) big business at Cranmore, and Pannier tank locomotives like No. 7754 were commonplace on the branch, making this visitor a particularly suitable choice, and it is the first time a BR-liveried member of the class will have appeared there since 1990, with South Devon-based classmate No. 5786 having subsequently visited in 2022 carrying London Transport colours and running as L92.

No. 7754 will run alongside the Dartmouth Steam Railway's 2-6-2T No. 4555, which is part way through a three-year loan to the ESR while Ivatt Class 2 2-6-0 No. 46447 undergoes overhaul.

Built in 1924 at Swindon, the small prairie had features such as outside steam pipes and enlarged bunker from new, unlike earlier members of the class which were later modified to have these. Following Nationalisation, it was allocated to the Welsh depots of Machynlleth and Pwllheli, alternating between them until 1957 when it moved to Westbury. It was preserved in 1965 when enthusiasts Pat Whitehouse and Pat Garland bought it from BR for £750. It was given a light overhaul at Swindon, as well as a spare boiler (which was the last to be overhauled at Wolverhampton) and a box van full of spares.




**Left: The Dartmouth Steam Railway's small prairie No. 4555 will head to Llangollen this spring to star in a Western-centric branch line gala.** OWEN HAYWARD

**Below: Llangollen Railway Trust flagship pannier No. 7754 will take part in the East Somerset Railway's spring steam gala.** OWEN HAYWARD




## From valley to valley

During its working life, No. 4555 was regularly seen on the Dart Valley branch and aptly became the first locomotive to arrive on the preserved line in 1965, later working the opening train in 1969, with Dr Beeching as one of the passengers. When the owners of the DVR purchased the line between Paignton and Kingswear (later the Dartmouth Steam Railway) in 1973, No. 4555 was one of the locomotives transferred there, where it has remained based ever since.

Following the ESR's gala, the small prairie will follow the visiting pannier tank back to Wales, where it will star as part of Llangollen's April 10-12 branch line weekend.

The event will include a loose recreation of the September 26, 1964, 'Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society AGM Special' which ran through Llangollen and Corwen on its way to Tywyn.

This tour was worked by No. 4555 double-heading with Manor class No. 7827 *Lydham Manor*, which also resides on the DSR, although this will not be visiting on this occasion and so LR resident GWR 2-8-0 No. 3802 will take its place in the recreation.

The gala will also be the last opportunity to enjoy haulage behind visiting Class 14 D9525, which arrived in spring 2025 on a year-long loan and is set to move on to a yet-to-be-confirmed destination after the event.

An additional visitor was under negotiation as this issue went to press; an LR spokesman confirmed that it was a tank engine.

This will be the second major steam gala event for the LR following its 2024 event that brought GWR Grange No. 6880 *Betton Grange* back to the line, the new build-project having been established in the running shed as Llangollen in the 1990s.

---

owner of William Cook Cast Products. The combined cost of the bearings, tyres and axles totals £88,000, which would not have been possible without the continued commitment and support of our members.

"Our focus in 2026 will be on ordering the remaining components for the wheelsets, enabling us to wheel the engine in 2027."

Gavin Bagley, from Timken's Dudley production facility, said: "This is the third such Steam Locomotive roller bearing wheelset project that we have delivered in recent years.

"We had previously manufactured the coupled wheel roller bearings for *Tornado* and *Duke of Gloucester*.

"Timken UK is in a unique position to support the UK heritage rail sector for these projects, with our ability to manufacture such legacy bearings according to their original designs but using the latest CNC production technology. We have the capability to manufacture most designs of cylindrical roller and ball bearings and can supply custom-engineered bearings for new installations or obsolete bearings for older equipment, often with short lead times."




**Right: Robert Riddles Clan Pacific No. 72010 *Hengist* at CTC Seal Ltd in Sheffield.** SSLCL

# Standard delivers the goods for Bluebell's new year gala

**By Owen Hayward**

JANUARY blues were confidently being kept at bay on New Year's Day thanks to the Bluebell Railway's mini gala which made full use of some of the stars at its disposal.

A four-strong locomotive line-up meant there was plenty of steam to enjoy, with the vibrant red livery of WR modified Hall 4-6-0 No. 6989 *Wightwick Hall* helping brighten the mood of anyone suffering from the post-Christmas lull. The locomotive is currently between filming duties for the television adaptation of the Harry Potter novels, which is being produced by HBO and has seen it repainted in red to fulfil the role of the Hogwarts Express.

Joining the Hall on full line trips was SR Battle of Britain class 4-6-2 No. 34059 *Sir Archibald Sinclair*, which carried a pair of golden arrows on its smokebox, having spent the previous evening hauling a special end-of-year Pullman dining service.

Also in steam was LBSCR A1 0-6-0T 'Terrier' No. 72 *Fenchurch*, resplendent in Stroudley's improved engine green. With the Hall and Bulleid locomotives offering travel aboard Mk. 1 and a variety of vintage carriages, the Terrier's services offered visitors a chance to enjoy a panoramic view of the line aboard LNWR observation saloon No. 1503 as it travelled between Sheffield Park and East Grinstead.

## Change of pace

One common feature of the Bluebell's new year steam day has been the appearance of the goods train, and 2026 was no different. While this normally sees the likes *Fenchurch* or SECR O1 No. 65 allocated to pull the restored wagons, it was time for something different this year as BR standard Class 5 No. 73082 *Camelot* put in a rare appearance on these workings.

Having banked *Fenchurch*'s first run as far as Horsted Keynes, the 5MT retrieved the wagons from the station yard before continuing to Kingscote where, following a shunt of the brake van to change ends, it undertook a non-stop run to Sheffield Park. This process was then carried out in reverse, with the train finishing up once again in the yard at Horsted Keynes, from where *Camelot* returned light engine to the sheds.




**Above: Normally the domain of the pre-Grouping locomotives, on this occasion the duty of goods locomotive was given to BR 5MT No. 73082 *Camelot*, pictured having emerged from Sharpthorne tunnel with the final run to Kingscote.** OWEN HAYWARD



**Still carrying regalia on its deflectors from the previous night's 'Golden Arrow' dining service, No. 34059 *Sir Archibald Sinclair* passes Waterworks with a Mk. 1 set, which was still decorated having been used on the railway's Steamlights services the month before.** OWEN HAYWARD

The mini gala proved a huge hit, with trains packed full – standing room only in some cases – giving the line a welcome success to start 2026. Services will now take a break until February half-term while track work is carried out, with relays planned at Ketches Wood outside Sheffield Park, which will see a long-standing 5mph speed restriction lifted.



**LBSCR A1X 'Terrier' No. 72 *Fenchurch* leaves Kingscote with the LNWR observation saloon, forming the 2.35pm service from East Grinstead.** NICK GILLIAM




**No. 6989 *Wightwick Hall* crests the summit of Freshfield Bank, its vibrant red livery standing out from the dull, wintry surroundings.** JAMES CUMMINS



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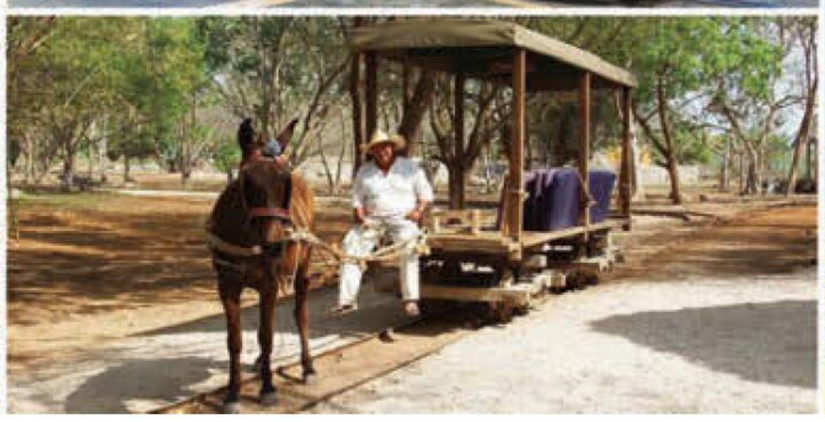
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|---|---|
| Jan, 22 to 29 | Catalonia by Special Train - Culture Tour |
| Jan, 23 to 29 | Catalonia Alco - was 2025 |
| March, 4 to 13 | Historic South-West Spain |
| March, 15 to 26 | Springtime in Sicily |
| March, 28 to April 10 | China in your Hand |
| April, 6 to 15 | Vintage Puglia |
| April, 17 to 27 | Galician Paradores |
| April, 29 to May 7 | Trieste, Ljubljana and Lake Bled - by Private Train |
| May, 1 to 5 | Slovenia One More Time - Maximum Power |
| May, 7 to 14 | Railway Ramble - Tamega and Chaves |
| May 28 to June 4 | Rotterdam and Dordt Steam Festival |
| May 28 to June 10 | Great Canadian Rail Adventure |
| June, 5 to 12 | Central Wales – Trains, Ales and Gardens |
| June, 12 to 16 | Portmeirion and Railways of Snowdonia |
| June, 12 to 20 | Scenic Railways of Asturias and Basque |
| June, 13 to 27 | Gorgeous Georgia |
| June, 19 to 28 | Classic Bulgaria and the Cherry Festival |
| June 26 to July 6 | Southern France and the Pyrenees |
| June, 27 to Jul 4 | The Stunning Railways of Norway |
| June 30 to July 9 | Denmark and Northern Germany |
| July 2 to 11 | Poland with Petras |
| July, 10 to 22 | Rail & Natural Wonders of Alaska |
| July, 15 to 29 | By Train to the Midnight Sun |
| August, 7 to 14 | Railways of Estonia |
| Sept, 3 to 10 | Magical Romania |
| Sept, 10 to 17 | Vintage Port |
| Sept, 11 to 21 | Berlin, Dresden and the Harz Mountains |
| Sept, 17 to 26 | Vintage Baltics |
| September TBC | Portugal CP tour - Vouga and Beira Alta |
| September TBC | West Country Food and Wine |
| Oct, 2 to 8 | Pisa and Corsica - Unescorted |
| Oct, 3 to 23 | USA Western States |
| Oct, 4 to 11 | Classic Montenegro |
| Oct, 7 to 15 | Undiscovered Bulgaria Autumn Colours |
| Oct, 7 to 17 | Rail Wonders of Sardinia |
| Oct, 15 to 22 | The Railways Around Bilbao |
| Oct, 15 to 22 | Undiscovered Portugal |
| Nov, TBC | Mexico |

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# Severn Valley endures sub-zero chills for a gala winner!

**Words and pictures by John Titlow**

WINTER hit hard around the new year with temperatures below zero and severe frosts. However, undaunted Severn Valley Railway volunteers staged a spectacular show for their third Winter Steam Gala, which took place on January 3/4.

All the locomotives in operation came from the home fleet, including GWR 4-6-0s No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* and No. 4930 *Hagley Hall* and 0-4-2T No. 1450, all Swindon-built. As reported on page 12, No. 7802 will head to the West Somerset on loan from April.

Completing the Great Western line-up was Kerr Stuart 0-6-0PT No. 7714.From the LMS came Stanier Mogul No. 13268, and Swindon-built BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75069 completed the roster. Nos. 7714 and 7802 were turned to face north after Christmas, giving greater variety for photography.

No. 1450 ran in auto mode between Highley and Kidderminster with GWR autocoach No. 178, in Great Western livery, and W238W *Chaffinch*, in maroon livery, working four return runs on the Saturday and just three on the Sunday. All proved very popular, with standing room only.

## Varied timetable

On both days, the three-car Class 108 DMU started on the 10.15am from Bridgnorth and then operated shuttles between Kidderminster and Bewdley. On the Saturday, it returned in the dark to Bridgnorth, finishing Sunday at Bewdley.

No. 1450 and 7714 double-headed into the night, hauling the return train on the Saturday. They departed Kidderminster at 8pm, arriving Bridgnorth at 9pm for a quick run-round and service before heading back south at 9.30pm, arriving at Kidderminster with the last train of the day at 10.27pm. With the steam heating on, the train was full as passengers kept warm, looking out on a frozen landscape.

Again in the darkness, Sunday saw the pair run a little earlier off Kidderminster at 5.30pm to Bridgnorth at 6.53pm. The train was one way only and the last northbound train to arrive at Bridgnorth. Coupled on the rear was No. 7802 on its return to shed. The last arrival at Kidderminster on Sunday was at 6.40pm behind No. 75069.

It was a busy timetable with non-stop action all day; timekeeping slipped slightly but was generally good. Eardington station was once again open for stopping trains.

Throughout the event, the weather was remarkable, being cold and frosty with little wind. Temperatures hardly rose above freezing all weekend, the mornings well below

**'The Inter City' departs Bewdley for Kidderminster with GWR 4-6-0 No. 4930 *Hagley Hall* towing the Great Western set on January 3.**






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**On the frosty morning of January 3, GWR 4-6-0 No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* runs into Bewdley station.**




**A night train with the 'Red Dragon' headboard runs into Hampton Loade behind No. 4930 *Hagley Hall*.**

zero. Everyone was hoping for snow, but this did not materialise; however, some could be seen on the top of Clee Hill in the distant background at Bewdley Tunnel.

SVR managing director Gus Dunster said: "The Winter Steam Gala was the perfect way to close the season, following on the heels of the very successful Winter Diesel Day.

"Both events featured imaginative timetables and were very well supported by visitors, with feedback again being comprehensively positive.

"One of the comments I received by email sums it up rather nicely, saying simply, 'Two brilliant events – the SVR is just the best railway ever!'

"I'd like to thank all the volunteers and staff involved, not just in these two events but over the whole season, for their dedication and hard work during what has certainly been a rollercoaster year. In true SVR fashion, we have prevailed through sheer determination. Thank you, all!"

## Events to come

The SVR's Boogie Lights Express will run on February 13/14, 20/21, 27/28 and March 6/7 and 13/14, and Paddington Bear pays a visit during half-term on February 17-19.

A new venture, the Branch Line Gala, takes place on February 28 and March 1 to celebrate 35 years since the first DMU arrived on the Severn Valley Railway.

Both Class 101 and 108 DMUs will be in service, alongside steam trains hauled by No. 1450 in auto mode, No. 7714, and *Bradley Manor* on Saturday only.

For further information, see svr.co.uk/event/branchline-weekend/




**GWR 0-4-2T No. 1450 departs Bewdley with the autotrain.**



**No. 4930 sets off light engine from Bewdley early on January 3.**




**GWR pannier No. 7714 pilots auto tank No. 1450 as they stop briefly at Hampton Loade on January 3.**




**Stanier mogul No. 13268 departs Bewdley for Kidderminster.**

# Essential bridge work cancels post-Christmas Whitby services

**By Owen Hayward**

THE North Yorkshire Moors Railway's plan to run winter Whitby services in the days following Christmas were cancelled in early December when the decision was made to bring forward planned bridge repair works at Grosmont, which have isolated the line's motive power depot from the rest of the railway.

In November, the railway announced it was planning to run steam services between Grosmont and Whitby stations, while trains on the heritage line towards Pickering were set to feature North Eastern Railway petrol-electric autocar No. 3170, which is making a return visit from the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway. However, on December 13, a subsequent announcement confirmed that the steam services across the Esk Valley line to the coast were suspended after an interim inspection of a bridge at Grosmont flagged up concerns which, although safe enough to see passage of trains during the festive season, the railway decided to address sooner rather than later.

Bridge 42, which carries the line over Murk Esk, sits between Front Street level crossing and the 120-yard-long Grosmont Tunnel. A detailed survey of the structure was conducted in May 2025, with some maintenance planned for spring 2026.

A follow-up inspection in early December resulted in that work needing to be brought forward. While the railway's advertised Santa specials continued unabated, a 'North Yorkshire Pullman' service scheduled for December 20 was cancelled and subsequent dining service plans altered ahead of the temporary line closure.

A NYMR statement said: "As part of our standard structural monitoring, we completed a detailed examination of Bridge 42 in May. Following an interim inspection, we have taken the sensible decision to bring forward essential maintenance by three months.



**LMS 'Black Five' No. 44806 crosses Bridge 42 during departure from Grosmont on April 9, 2024. The right-hand line leads back to the motive power depot, and with scheduled repair work brought forward putting a block on the line, the North Yorkshire Moors Railway's winter services to Whitby therefore had to be suspended.** KENNY FELSTEAD

"Work will commence on this in the new year. Due to this essential maintenance work, we have made the difficult decision to cancel our planned Pickering to Whitby services scheduled for December 27 to January 4.

"The NER Autocar will operate between Pickering and Goathland only, and the 'North Yorkshire Pullman,' Festive Travel and Treats, GWS Afternoon Tea and Christmas charters will continue to operate on a Pickering-Goathland return basis."

# Swanage volunteers carry off 10 awards for blooming success

**By Robin Jones**

SWANAGE Railway volunteers who look after five stations on the line have scooped 10 awards for floral and neighbourhood excellence in a regional competition.

Swanage, Herston, Harman's Cross, Corfe Castle and Norden each received two Stations In Bloom awards from the South and South East in Bloom organisation, with one of the It's Your Neighbourhood awards for each station being sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society.

Other awards went to local councils and communities for large towns, cemeteries, gardens, beach fronts and community projects in Dorset, east Wiltshire, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Sussex, Surrey and Kent.

One of the competition judges, Derek Beer, from Shaftesbury, said: "The five SR stations were flagship entries involving horticulture, community involvement and environmental activity. Four of the stations justifiably achieved the highest possible awards.

"Having the privilege of being shown around the stations and meeting such incredibly talented and dedicated volunteers, I cannot wait to meet them all again for next year's competition."



**The awards recipients at Harman's Cross station.** ANDREW PM WRIGHT



**In Bloom competition judge Derek Beer visiting Corfe Castle station.** ANDREW PM WRIGHT

Swanage station won the South and South East In Bloom Silver Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award.

## Honours rollcall

The Herston community halt won the South and South East In Bloom Silver Gilt Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award in the level four Thriving category.

Harman's Cross station won the South and South East In Bloom Gold Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award in the level five Outstanding category.

Corfe Castle station won the South and South East In Bloom Silver Gilt Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award in the level four Thriving category.

Finally, Norden station won the South and South East In Bloom Gold Award, also sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award in the level four Thriving category.

Mike Brown is a volunteer at Norden station and said: "The friendly Norden station maintenance and gardening team was surprised and honoured to receive the awards. We take great pride in caring for Norden station – which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2025 – because first impressions count, and we try to support the environment and biodiversity by encouraging native flora and fauna."

Herston community halt volunteer Frank Roberts said: "With Herston halt being the smallest station on the SR, our success recognises the effort of many dedicated members in the team, especially Marilyn Carter and Carol Wright, who sadly lost her husband Pete in 2024.

"Pete was a regular Herston halt volunteer for more than 20 years, and we keep the station looking good in his memory."



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**GWR 2-6-2T No. 4150 with its side tanks fitted is seen inside Bridgnorth shed on December 23.** JOHN TITLOW



**Beamish Museum-owned Sharp Stewart 0-4-4T No. 4085 of 1895 *Dunrobin* with its new boiler trial-fitted.** JOHN TITLOW

# Last unrestored Severn Valley loco on final leg

**By John Titlow**

THE final push is on at the Severn Valley Railway as GWR large prairie No. 4150 is beginning to take shape inside Bridgnorth shed, with its boiler now in place and its side tanks fitted.

Designed by Charles Collett, it was built in 1947 at Swindon Works, entering service at Stourbridge Junction. It worked local services which may have included those over the Severn Valley, making it a very local engine.

From 1953 to 1962, it was in the West Country, shedded at Weymouth, Taunton, Exeter and Newton Abbot. Its final shed was Severn Tunnel Junction where, in a rundown condition, it was used to bank heavy trains through the tunnel.

After only 18 years in service, it was withdrawn in 1965 and sent to Woodham Brothers scrapyard.

Purchased in 1973 by The 4150 Fund, it left Barry in 1974 in the company of GWR4-6-0 No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* and was towed by a Class 25 diesel to Parkend, on the Dean Forest Railway, where restoration proved difficult.

Still in ex-scrapyard condition, No. 4150 arrived at Bewdley on January 19, 1978, and remains the only SVR-based locomotive to have never steamed in preservation.

Little happened until 2007, when the fund formed a new committee and began a concerted effort to complete the restoration which had been in progress for more than 30 years.

Now in the final stages of restoration, No. 4150 is expected to return to steam at the April 16-19 spring steam gala.

For further information and details of how you can help, visit the website www.4150.org.uk

Meanwhile, the new boiler made at the SVR's Bridgnorth's boiler shop for repatriated 1895-built Sharp Stewart 0-4-4T No. 4085 *Dunrobin* has been trial-fitted in place to enable pipework to be manufactured and installed.

# West Somerset Association sets sights on the year 2028 for completing tank engine duo's overhauls

THE West Somerset Railway Association aims to complete the overhaul and return to working life of two of its trio of steam locomotives within the next 30 months, namely GWR small prairie No. 4561 and BR Standard 4MT 2-6-4T No. 80064.

No. 4561 was built at Swindon in 1924 and began its working life in the West Midlands, but most if its career with the GWR and BR was spent in the South West of England, with time based in Truro and later Newton Abbot. During its time in South Devon, it became a very regular performer on the long-closed branch between South Brent and Kingsbridge.

The combination of branch line closures and the introduction of diesel traction saw it withdrawn, and it spent 13 years in Barry scrapyard before the WSRA purchased it in 1975, a year before the first section of the Minehead branch reopened as a heritage railway; the association has owned the locomotive for longer than either of its previous owners.

The majority of the restoration work is being carried out in the workshops at Williton, but specialist boiler work is being undertaken by Riley and Sons in Bury. Another volunteer team is constructing new water tanks – working off of original GWR drawings – in the Minehead workshops.

## Standard fare

No. 80064 emerged from Brighton Works in 1953 and first worked on the southern end of the West Coast Main Line but soon went to the Southern Region in Kent until early 1960s electrification, when it moved west. Based at Exmouth Junction, it was a regular performer in East Devon and on the Exmouth line.

Rescued from Barry by the 80064 Locomotive Group, initial restoration and a return to work was carried out at what is now the South Devon Railway.

It moved to the Bluebell Railway in the 1980s and was resident there until the 80064 Group presented it to the WSRA in 2023. Work on its return to steam is underway at Williton.

The WSRA is raising funds separately for each engine, and for No. 80064, two WSR volunteers, Joe Rodgers and Reece Bartle-Coates, are running in the 2026 London Marathon.

Joe is an experienced athlete who has run the length of the WSR in the past, while Reece is carefully working his way towards the 26-mile challenge.

Joe's online fundraising page is at https://2026londonmarathon.enthuse.com/pf/joseph-rogers-wsra-2026 and Reece's is at https://2026londonmarathon.enthuse.co/pf/reece-bartle-coates

Donations to either locomotive's fund can be made via wsra.org.uk or by cheque made payable to West Somerset Railway Association and sent to The Railway Station, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3XQ (indicate which locomotive the donation is for).

WSRA chairman Edward Martin said: "We are looking at our steam locomotives being at work in the decades to come. And once the two tank engines are complete, we have another project to work on in the form of WR 4-6-0 No. 7821 *Ditcheat Manor* and its tender." The Manor last steamed in 2007.

## New third line for West Huntspill

**SOMERSET'S West Huntspill Miniature Railway has completed a major expansion with the addition of a 7¼in line alongside its 3½in and 5in gauge tracks.**

**The West Huntspill Model Engineering Society, which was formed in 1967, had worked on the project for 14 years, with the aim of facilitating bigger sit-in trains.**

**The new ground-level line runs around the perimeter of the site in West Huntspill Memorial Playing Field. It was opened for Santa specials in December.**

**The railway's 2026 season will start on April 5.**

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**Above: U class No. 31806 at Norden Gates on January 4.** ANDREW PM WRIGHT



**Right: LSWR William Adams T3 4-4-0 No. 563 runs through Furzebrook on January 4.** ANDREW PM WRIGHT

# Successful frosty beginning to seaside line's 50th celebrations

**By Robin Jones**

DESPITE freezing temperatures, the number of visitors to the Swanage Railway's Winter Warm Up weekend on January 3-4 was said to be double that of last year.

The bumper attendance once again showed that heritage railway events can be a major crowd-puller for seaside resorts well outside the spring and summer seasons.

The event marked the start of a year of celebrations for the Purbeck lines' 50th anniversary.

It was in February 1976 that a small group of dedicated volunteers started restoration work at a disused and boarded-up Swanage station – half a century later, the result is one of Europe's finest coastal heritage lines.

The steam locomotives rostered were unique Victorian LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563 from the 1890s, Southern Railway U class 2-6-0 No. 31806 from the 1920s, which used to haul holidaymaker trains to Corfe Castle and Swanage from Basingstoke and Eastleigh during the 1950s, and 1940s Bulleid West Country light Pacific No. 34028 *Eddystone*, which has returned to the Swanage Railway after hauling several excursion trains on the national railway network for the first time since 1964.

Diesels scheduled to run were 1960s British Railways Class 33s No. D6515 *Jenny Lewis RN* and No. 33053. However, 1940s Battle of Britain class Bulleid Pacific No. 34070 *Manston* replaced D6515, which was unavailable due to a faulty engine component; with many specialist suppliers on their Christmas shutdown, it was not possible to source the necessary parts in time to carry out a repair, despite the best efforts of Swanage officials.



**No. 34070 *Manston* approaches Furzebrook on January 3.** JAMES CUMMINS

Swanage chief executive officer Abbie King said: "What an incredible Winter Warm Up weekend. Despite the bitterly cold weather, we were delighted to welcome double the number of visitors compared to last year, which is a real testament to the strength of the event and the hard work of everyone involved.

"A huge thank-you to everyone who braved the conditions to support us, and especially to those who captured and shared such amazing photos and videos – they really helped tell the story of the weekend and showcase the atmosphere on the railway. Above all, thanks go to our staff and volunteers who went above and beyond in challenging conditions to deliver a successful event. Your commitment, enthusiasm and resilience are what make days like this possible.

"Watch out for more exciting announcements about what's coming to the Swanage Railway in 2026!"



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**Battle of Britain class Bulleid Pacific No. 34070 *Manston* heads away from Corfe Castle on January 4.** ANDREW PM WRIGHT



**LSWR T3 No. 563 departs Swanage on January 3.** NICK GILLIAM



**West Country light Pacific No. 34028 *Eddystone* approaches Creech crossing with the 10.07am from the River Frome on January 3.** NICK GILLIAM



**Class 33 No. 33053 passes Holme Lane on January 4. Built in 1961, No. 33053 was based at the Hither Green and Stewarts Lane depots during its BR working career.** ANDREW PM WRIGHT



**Bulleid light Pacific pair No. 34028 *Eddystone* and No. 34070 *Manston* at Swanage on January 4.** ANDREW PM WRIGHT

# Final freight farewell for Telfordrailway's 'Taffy' tank

**By Martin Creese**




**GWR 0-6-2T No. 5619 at Horsehay & Dawley station during a photo charter following the Winter Warmer day at the Telford Steam Railway on December 28.** EWAN CREESE

THE end of 2025 saw the Telford Steam Railway bid farewell to GWR 0-6-2T No. 5619, which bowed out of service and now requires overhaul.

Sunday, December 28 saw the line host a Winter Warmer day featuring Class 37 No. 37263, Class 08 No. 08784, visiting from the Great Central Railway (Nottingham), and Collett No. 5619, which had also marked the centenary of its construction at Swindon in 1925. The gala followed a successful season of Polar Express trains, during which the locomotive took the number 1225, the identity of Pere Maruette N-1 class 2-8-4 which featured in the festive film.

Although the term 'Taffy' tank is perhaps most commonly associated with the Taff Vale Railway Class 02 0-6-2Ts, the 5600 class was also known by this nickname owing to its strong connections with South Wales. No. 5619 was withdrawn from BR service in 1964, and it was not until 1973 that it was rescued from Barry scrapyard, having been bought by the Telford Development Corporation, initially for static display at Horsehay goods shed.

In 1976, the Telford Horsehay Steam Trust was formed with a view to restoring it to operational condition, which it successfully achieved in 1981 on what would later become the TSR.

In recent years, No. 5619 has been a roving ambassador for the railway, working on many other preserved lines, but it has been back on its home line since 2022 after returning from a hire to the Llangollen Railway.

In 2017, it was repainted in BR black with early crest, the costs sponsored by 30742 Charters via an appeal. It was therefore fitting that an evening photography session was held at the end of the Winter Warmer day organised by the group, with a focus on Horsehay & Dawley station, transformed under floodlights, with the locomotive coupled to a short freight set.

The TSR runs along a section of the former railway from Wellington to Lightmoor Junction, with its services running from Spring Bank station, which sits on the site of the former Horsehay works sidings, through Heath Hill tunnel and to a northern terminus at Lawley, before returning to Horsehay & Dawley station and reversing; trains on December 28 ran in top-and-tail formation, with steam leading in one direction and the Class 37 in the other.

At Horsehay and Dawley station, a new wooden building has been constructed to replace the long-demolished brick one, passenger services having been withdrawn in July 1962, while a new signalbox is being built on the foundations of the original. All the brickwork for this has recently been completed, with the woodwork, roof and installation of the frame still to do.

Plans are in place to extend south firstly to Doseley Halt, the platform for which still exists, and then onwards to Lightmoor Junction, with future ambitions towards Coalbrookdale and Ironbridge.

# Swindon's Victorian GWR swimming baths reopens to the public

**By Robin Jones**

A GRADE II*-listed swimming pool built by the GWR and said to be part of Swindon's 'international significance' is to reopen on January 19 following a major two-year refurbishment.

The Victorian Health Hydro, in Milton Road, originally known as the Swimming Baths and Dispensary, was built in 1891 for GWR workers living nearby.

It featured baths and pools, a dispensary, and consulting rooms for doctors and dentists. Further baths were added in the early 20th century.

Restoration plans began in 2018 when Swindon Borough Council commissioned an options appraisal for the future of the building. A report by the council's specialist historic building consultant, Donald Insall Associates, described the relationship between GWR, Swindon, and Isambard Kingdom Brunel as of international significance.

The report added that "no similar buildings are known of anywhere," and that the baths were "known to be the oldest surviving, continuously working Victorian style example in Europe, if not the world" and one of the few public baths still in existence.

The report also praised many of the architectural features of the building, which it said provided "a unique and significant example of craftsmanship."

In partnership with leaseholder Greenwich Leisure Limited, Swindon Heritage Preservation and Historic England, the authority secured funding of about £8.6 million for the renovation of the project, which involved upgrades to its gym, changing rooms, Turkish baths and large swimming pool. The mechanical, electrical and plumbing plant systems have also been upgraded throughout the facility to reduce the overall energy consumption.

Repairs to the facade, roof, valley gutters, doors and windows have also been completed to preserve the building's integrity.

The project was scheduled to have been completed in late 2024 but was delayed following the discovery of asbestos and structural leaks.

Beyond the main pool hall, future phases aim to revive the smaller pool area, Turkish baths, and the dispensary, providing that further funding can be sourced.

Coun Marina Strinkovsky, cabinet member for planning and placemaking, said she "cannot wait" to see the public's reaction to the transformation.



**The refurbished main pool at Swindon's Heath Hydro, built by the GWR for its workers 135 years ago.** SBC

"There were many people who never thought they would see the inside of the building again," she added. "So many generations of Swindonians have used this building and learned to swim here while visiting as children. I think it's going to be very joyful for a lot of people."



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INSIDE TRACK

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- A Wurlitzer performance at Thursford
- The Nene Valley Railway – continental heritage.
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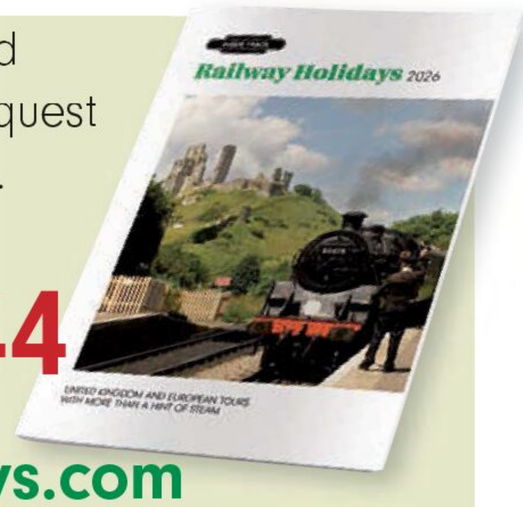
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# Boiler arrives for UK's most powerful new-build as fine art print backs P2

**By Robin Jones**

THE boiler for what will be Britain's most powerful steam locomotive, Gresley P2 -2-8-2 No. 2007 *Prince of Wales*, was delivered to the new Darlington Locomotive Works on December 9.

The boiler is the single largest component required for The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust's £7 million P2 project. Costing more than £500,000, it was built at Dampflokwerk, in Meiningen, Germany.

Before delivery, the boiler underwent a hydraulic test and was approved by the TÜV Certification body. Following delivery, it is now housed alongside the wheeled frames, tender and monobloc fabricated cylinder.

Built in the 1930s, the P2 'Mikados' were the most powerful express passenger locomotives to ever operate in the UK and were designed to haul 600-ton trains over the arduous Edinburgh to Aberdeen route.





**Above: The new P2 boiler being unloaded.** A1SLT

**Left: The boiler for P2 2-8-2 2 No. 2007 *Prince of Wales* inside Darlington Locomotive Works on the Hopetown Darlington side.** A1SLT

## Proud day

P2 project director Richard Courteney-Harris MBE said: "It is a proud day for the trust as we begin to see the dream becoming reality as the P2 starts to take shape. The boiler is the beating heart of any locomotive, and as the largest and most expensive component, its delivery is a message of intent as we look forward to *Prince of Wales* steaming for the first time.

"As the railways celebrated their bicentenary, we are delighted to be building on that proud heritage, here in Darlington, where it all began with *Locomotion No.1* 200 years ago."

It is anticipated that the P2 will make its movements in three years' time. The project, which was launched in 2013, is predominantly funded by enthusiasts pledging £10 a month, with larger ticket items, such as the recent delivery, paid for by larger donations to the Boiler Club. To date, £5 million has already been raised. For more details about the P2 project and how to support it, visit www.a1steam.com

Meanwhile, a percentage of the proceeds from the sales of Over The Forth, a gallery-quality fine art print by photographer John C Brownlie, are being given to support the new-build P2 project.

In 1992, John, then a young man at school in Edinburgh, was inspired by the railway art of Terence Cuneo and given permission by John Cameron, then chairman of ScotRail, to join the footplate crew of his A4 Pacific No. 60009 *Union of South Africa* as it thundered across the Forth Bridge. John's Kodak negative remained archived until 2023.




**John C Brownlie and Steve Davis MBE, chairman of The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, with the new *Prince of Wales* under construction in Darlington.** A1SLT

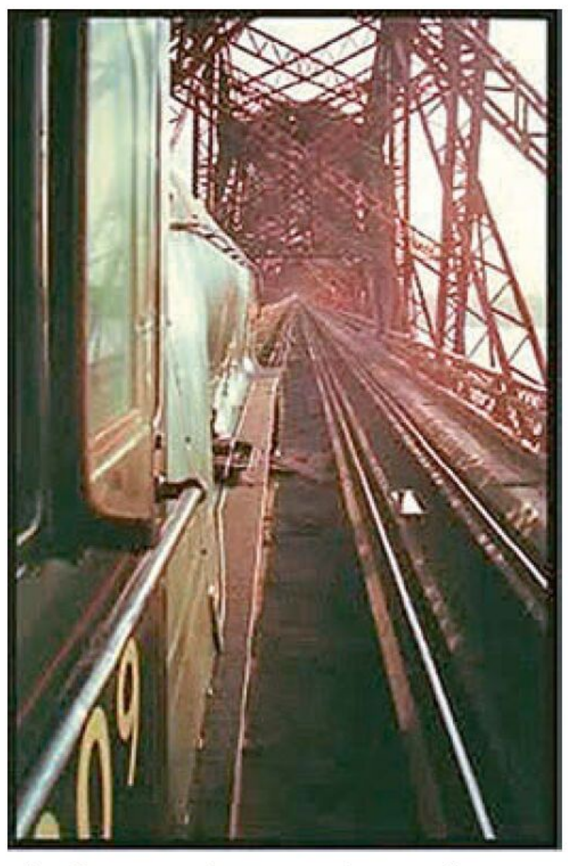
## Seal of approval

Mr Cameron personally approved Over The Forth to commemorate the life and retirement of No. 60009, saying: "This print brings back many a fond memory of driving No. 9. It's rare to have any picture from No. 9's footplate on the main line… but to be a professional shot and taken out on the bridge in the 1990s… as soon as I saw it, I said, 'now, that's a good one. That's the real MacKay!'"

Over The Forth, which was reviewed in *Heritage Railway* issue 326, recently went on public display at The Danum Gallery, Library and Museum in Doncaster in the build-up to the 150th anniversary of Gresley's birth on June 19, 1876. It now hangs next to LNER Gresley V2 2-6-2 No. 4771 *Green Arrow* from the National Collection – and it is also in the same gallery, just a short distance away from the original 1947 oil painting, Giants Refreshed by Terence Cuneo, which inspired the photographer's personal journey. Mr Brownlie said: "I hope this commemorative print captures some of the romance of rail travel – a moment from the very peak of her years in preservation, in this most iconic of locations. I hope it evokes fond memories of journeys made and inspires new travel adventures."

The Gresley Society Trust chairman Philip Benham MBE added: "This superb photo brings together two of the greatest railway engineering achievements in our railway history – the magnificence of Sir Nigel Gresley's streamlined A4s and the spectacular setting of the Forth Bridge. It's also a reminder of how much we all owe to John Cameron, who kept No. 9 running for well over half a century longer, by far, than in its everyday working life."

**➜ Over The Forth is available in A3, A2 and A1 sizes priced between £150 and £230 from www.johncharlesmedia.com/shop/forth**



**The fine art print Over The Forth.** JOHN C BROWNLIE



**Pre-order Issue 342:** Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

# New boiler for Darjeeling tank now underway

ASSEMBLY of a new boiler for Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Sharp Stewart B 0-4-0ST No. 19B – the only locomotive from the line outside India – has begun at the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways' award-winning Boston Lodge Works.

The Darjeeling Tank Locomotive Trust, which was formed in 2023 to acquire the locomotive, also numbered 778, and its two replica carriages from the estate of the late Adrian Shooter had first hoped that the boiler – the oldest still in use on a locomotive anywhere in the world – could be repaired for another 10-year ticket.

Following a competitive tendering process, the contract for the new boiler was awarded to Boston Lodge. Trust chairman Jeremy Davey said: "This meant up to another £100,000 was required over initial £140,000 boiler repair estimates. Engineers suggested that repairs could be undertaken but would only extend the boiler life by up to three years, whereas a new one should last 30 years."

The new boiler barrel and dome arrived at Boston Lodge from Barnshaws Engineering on August 21 last year.



**The new boiler for No. 19 at Boston Lodge.** ANDY SAVAGE/DTLT



**Boilersmith Bob Yates preparing the 19B throatplate at Boston Lodge on November 10.** PAUL LEWIN/FF&WHR

Jeremy said: "With all the components (finally!) at Boston Lodge, work has commenced to assemble them into a boiler. The early stages involve a lot of looking, measuring, comparing and adjusting to ensure that all the pressed and bent components match up properly.

"The news on boiler progress is really encouraging and, with the boiler fully funded, we look forward to hearing about construction progress going into 2026. We still need a relatively small amount to complete the locomotive's reconstruction after the boiler has been completed." The details are online at www.darjeelingtank.org.uk

Because of previous delays, it is now expected that is is more likely that No. 19B will be back in service in 2027 rather than in 2026 as had been envisaged. The next 19B supporters' day will be held at Boston Lodge to see the new boiler being manufactured.

The locomotive and its carriages are now based at the Statfold Barn Railway near Tamworth.

At its annual general meeting on November 3, trustee Gordon Rushton, who played a central role in the formation of the trust, stood down and was appointed as a vice president.

# North Norfolk DMU testing makes a 36-years first for class

DECEMBER 12 was an historic moment in DMU preservation when efforts to create an operational Class 104 two-car unit brought about a test run along the whole of the North Norfolk Railway – the first time that a power and trailer car formation has operated since the class was withdrawn Network South East 36 years ago.

The sole-surviving Class 104 Driving Trailer Second Lavatory No. 56182 has been operational on the line since late 2023. Its nine-and-a-half-year restoration was nominated for the Railcar Association's railcar of the year award, where it scooped second place. With no operational second car from the class available, it has run coupled to one of the NNR's many other DMU trailers. In the meantime, father-and-son team Paul and Chris Moxon, who completed the majority of that restoration work themselves, have been progressing with the restoration of Driving Motor Brake Second No. M50479 as they sought to create a restored and operational two-car example of the class.

Built between 1957 and 1959 by Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Company, the Class 104 was one of the designs resulting from BR's modernisation plan, with the first units ordered for the London Midland Region, the majority of which went on to work exclusively in the north west. They could be found working services from Manchester to destinations including Buxton, Blackpool, and New Mills, their lightweight chassis suited to the steep grades found along many of these routes.

No. M50479 is one of 13 1950s Class 104 railcars owned by or in the custody of the Bury-based Birmingham RailCar Workgroup and spread across three heritage lines.

The collection started in 1992 when two private individuals, who later became founding members of the group, successfully tendered for 12 from BR, while No. M56182 was added in 2000.

No. M50479 was previously used as a locomotive-hauled push-pull carriage at the Telford Steam Railway until 2018 so had never run further than a mile in one go.

Restoration of No. M50479 commenced in earnest following the completion of the DTSL, with attention to the bodywork being undertaken to ensure the vehicle is watertight ahead of an interior refurbishment.

Mechanical fettling has also occurred, and in order to check the work already undertaken, as well as to ascertain what else was still required, the two driving trailers were coupled together and on December 12 completed 30 miles of running over the NNR.

In addition to being a morale booster to those who have been involved with restorations of both vehicles so far, it was also a preservation first for the Class 104. While two-car examples of the class can be found operating at both the Llangollen and East Lancashire railways, both are made up of two powered vehicles, meaning that this test run was therefore the first time that a power and trailer car combination has been seen operating since the withdrawal of the class from revenue-earning service in 1989.

The weight of the trailer and a run up the 1-in-80 Kelling Heath bank at speed therefore gave a great opportunity to put M5049 to the test after many years of confinement. The DMBS has now returned to its shelter within Weybourne yard where its restoration will now continue.



**The first operational Class 104 power and trailer combination to work in preservation, with partly completed DMBS No. 50479 coupled to restored DTSL No. 56182, seen at Windpump crossing on the NNR during testing on December 12.** CHRIS MOXON

# Eight in steam for Bluebell's mixed-size spring steam gala

**By Owen Hayward**

A TRIO of visiting locomotives will headline the Bluebell Railway's March 20-22 gala, which this year steps away from the traditional branch line theme that in recent times has seen this springtime event offer a line-up in contrast to the annual autumnal celebration of steam giants.

Crossing the Solent for the first time since completing its latest overhaul in February 2025, LBSCR A1X 'Terrier' W8 *Freshwater* will visit from the Isle of Wight Steam Railway to support classmate and Bluebell resident A1 No. 72 *Fenchurch*, offering a comparison between two different members of a class that received multiple modifications and rebuilds in the years following its introduction in 1872. 'Terriers' have become synonymous with the Bluebell Railway, with *Fenchurch* having arrived in 1964, four years after classmate No. 55 *Stepney* worked the embryonic heritage line's first trains in August 1960.

The railway has an affinity with these popular 0-6-0Ts and has hosted several gatherings of them, including one in November 2000 and another in July 2022; the latter was planned to celebrate the 150th anniversary of *Fenchurch* (as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 297), although the overhaul of that particular locomotive was not completed in time to see it take part in proceedings – while visiting A1X No. 70 *Poplar* suffered a big end failure that resulted in both connecting rods becoming bent. That event saw the IOWSR's other resident 'Terrier',W11 *Newport*, appear, which ended up becoming the only example of the class to work all three days of the gala, which took place on July 29-31, 2022 – although as it is only fitted with air brakes (as all IOW-based locomotives were), it had to double-head with another locomotive throughout. As *Freshwater* faces the same restriction, it will operate in the same manner, and it is anticipated that it will be paired up with *Fenchurch* at times.





**Above: The tender tank from Q class 0-6-0 No. 541 in the workshops at Sheffield Park, where it is now being painted and prepared to be placed onto the chassis.** STEVE PILCHER

**Left: Isle of Wight 'Terrier' W8 *Freshwater* will visit Sussex in March to appear at the Bluebell Railway's spring steam gala, where it will feature alongside classmate Fenchurch.** OWEN HAYWARD

## Saint and Standard

With the Bluebell's resident BR 5MT No. 73082 *Camelot* having visited the Severn Valley Railway in September 2025 for that line's autumn steam gala, the tradition of reciprocal arrangements meant the announcement of BR 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75069 did not come as a surprise to many. Built at Swindon in 1955, it was one of a handful of the class to be fitted with a double chimney. With No. 80151 based in Sussex, the visit will enable a comparison between tender and tank engine versions of this powerful BR class of Standards.

Completing the line-up will be GWR Saint 4-6-0 No. 2999 *Lady of Legend*, which has remained at the Bluebell since its appearance at the Giants of Steam gala on October 17-19, 2025, (*Heritage Railway* issue 339), which featured four new-build locomotives. Constructed utilising a number of components recovered from a GWR Hall 4-6-0 and finished in 2019, it is nominally based at the Didcot Railway Centre, although it has spent much of the last few years out on extended hire to lines which have otherwise faced a shortfall in available steam locomotives.

In addition to *Fenchurch* and the Standard tank, locomotives from the Bluebell home fleet will include *Camelot*, SR Battle of Britain 4-6-2 No. 34059 *Sir Archibald Sinclair* and SECR O1 No. 65, the latter of which was undergoing winter maintenance as this issue went to press. With its last overhaul completed in July 2017, it is now rapidly approaching the end of its boiler certificate and will soon be due to be withdrawn for overhaul.

LBSCR H2 Atlantic No. 32424 *Beachy Head* will not be in service for the gala as that will be undergoing its own period of maintenance, while WR Modified Hall 4-6-0 No. 6989 *Wightwick Hall* (on long-term loan from Buckinghamshire Railway Centre) is also expected to be unavailable and therefore is not currently included on the locomotive roster. Despite the absence of this pair, the gala will still see a maximum of eight locomotives in operation and promises an intensive timetable, with plenty happening across the railway to create numerous photographic opportunities.




**Double-chimney BR Standard 4MT No. 75069 will enjoy a brief holiday away from its home at the Severn Valley Railway to appear at the Bluebell Railway's March 20-22 spring steam gala.** OWEN HAYWARD

## Overhaul progress

Meanwhile, progress is being made on several overhauls taking place in the railway's workshops. The Maunsell Society's Q class 0-6-0 No. 541 has seen the construction of a new tender tank completed, with cleaning and painting now progressing. Repairs are also being made to boiler cladding.

At Leaky Finders, in Devon, contractors have almost completed replacing all of the firebox stays, with replacement horn blocks also fitted.

Leaky Finders is also currently home to the boiler for SR West Country Pacific No. 21C123 *Blackmoor Vale*, which is now being prepared to receive a new firebox, the current one having been found to be life-expired.

Work on the Maunsell Society's other under-overhaul Schools 4-4-0, No. 928 *Stowe*, has also resumed. A flaw had been discovered in the left-hand cylinder, which was found to be unrepairable, necessitating the order of a replacement.

The order has now been placed with East Coast Castings, and while funds are on hand for this, the subsequent machining is estimated to cost £15,000, which the society is now looking to raise.

**➜ For details of how to support this, contact MLS treasurer Steve Pilcher by email: jstevepilcher@yahoo.co.uk**



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# Electric preservation group hits target for Project Yellow Submarine appeal

**By Owen Hayward**



**Class 315 DMS No. 64571 will receive emergency weatherproofing repairs thanks to a successful £1000 fundraising appeal for the cost of the required works.** ACMU

AN appeal for funds to assist with the vital weatherproofing of a Class 315 EMU met its target within just four days.

The AC Multiple Unit Society, formed in 2025 following the merger of the Clacton Express Preservation Group and the Class 315 Preservation Society, is custodian of two Class 309s and one Class 317 driving trailer, plus complete Class 313 and 315 EMUs, which are sited at multiple locations in England and Wales.

The four-car Class 315 No. 315856 is based at the Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway in South Wales, where it arrived in 2023 following the class's withdrawal from service on the Liverpool Street to Southend route in December 2022.

Although volunteer efforts have sought to maintain the units, as they now permanently live outdoors, the weather has begun to take its toll on their condition. The integrity of the four vehicles is now deteriorating rapidly, with the cabs and saloon beginning to suffer from major water ingress. An agreement has been reached with the L&MMR that has seen an opportunity to take one vehicle into the workshops in January, where it will be subject to an intense programme of work to combat further deterioration.

On December 20, the group launched the Project Yellow Submarine appeal to raise £1000 towards this work, with a further £500 available through match funding from an anonymous donor.

"If the unit's condition continues to decline at the current rate without intervention, we could be at serious risk of losing the sole-surviving Class 315 in preservation," a spokesman said. "To rectify this situation, we are delighted to confirm that an agreement has been reached with the railway to allow Driving Motor Standard No. 64571 to be shunted undercover for a short period. This rare opportunity will allow a structured programme of hands-on work to begin in a controlled environment, something that is not possible while the vehicle is stored outdoors."

### Swift success

Just four days after its launch, the appeal target was successfully met, with funds continuing to come in, meaning work can begin as planned.

"Our volunteers will focus on essential repair tasks, including investigating and addressing sources of water ingress, undertaking roof-level repairs, carrying out bodyside preparation, and applying protective priming and undercoat to stabilise the vehicle's condition," the spokesman added.

Project lead Lakshman Pathak added: "We hope the work undertaken indoors will be fruitful for the vehicle's longevity in preservation and set a strong foundation for providing similar treatment to the remaining vehicles throughout 2026."

**➜ To donate, visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/acmu-society; for further information, see www.acmusociety.com/yellow-submarine**

# Global game players raise more than £30k for L&B

THE Lynton and Barnstaple Railway has featured in a special event in the Train Station mobile games from the Pixel Federation, bringing the line to a global audience and raising more than £30,000 for it.

The Pixel Federation, a computer games company based in Slovakia, hosts players worldwide. When players of its Train Station games were asked which locomotive they would like to feature next, they chose new-build Baldwin 2-4-2T No. 762 *Lyn,* on the L&B.

The company approached the L&BR Trust last summer to collaborate on a charity initiative launched in November, its Save the Rails campaign including *Lyn*.

As a result, 250,000 monthly players worldwide could download *Lyn* in the Train Station 2 and 3 games, generating a cash windfall for the trust.

It is the first time a British narrow gauge locomotive has appeared in this game.




**The Lynton and Barnstaple Railway and *Lyn* now have a worldwide audience in a special segment of the Train Station games.** PIXEL FEDERATION

One of the game's producers commented: "We hoped players would enjoy a new locomotive in the game. What we didn't expect was messages from gamers around the world saying they now want to visit Exmoor or support heritage railways in their local area."

Trust vice chairman Giles Perkins, who is also a fireman on *Lyn*, said: "We are hugely grateful to Train Station players around the globe who've kindly supported us through this exciting initiative. Their generosity will help us further improve the iconic L&BR."

## Join the Night Shift at Peak Rail!

**PEAK Rail's late-evening special event, the Night Shift, is to return on Saturday, February 21.**

**A celebration of railways in the dark, the event is described as a unique combination of nostalgia, live entertainment and authentic railway experiences.**

**Bardic and paraffin lamps cast a warm glow, while signalboxes, crossings and stations are lit to recreate the 1960s atmosphere.**

**Home-based steam and diesel locomotives will recreate a bygone era beneath the night sky, with passenger and freight trains running from Rowsley South.**

**For a supplement, visitors can ride in a traditional brake van, complete with a glowing stove, and get a sense of what it was like to be a guard on steam-hauled freight in the 1960s as they travel between stations.**

**Live music performances will complement the ambiance of the event, and a wide range of local ales and craft beers will be on sale, with an on-train bar.**

**Adult and senior citizens tickets cost £18 if booked in advance at www.peakrail.co.uk or £20 on the day, and children go free.**

## Boiler fault sees centenarian 7F pulled early

**SHERINGHAM-BASED LMS 7F No. 13809 was withdrawn for overhaul a few days ahead of schedule following the discovery of a leaking superheater element.**

**Built at the Darlington Works of Robert Stephenson & Co in 1925 for the Somerset & Dorset Railway, the locomotive celebrated its centenary during 2025. Originally due to be withdrawn in June, its boiler certification was given an extension that permitted its use until January 3, 2026, and had been billed to run the NNR's Mince Pie Specials from December 27 until that date.**

**Following the discovery of the defective superheater on December 29, it was decided that any efforts to repair it would not have been viable, and so it was replaced by WD 2-10-0 No. 90775.**

# SAVE 38%

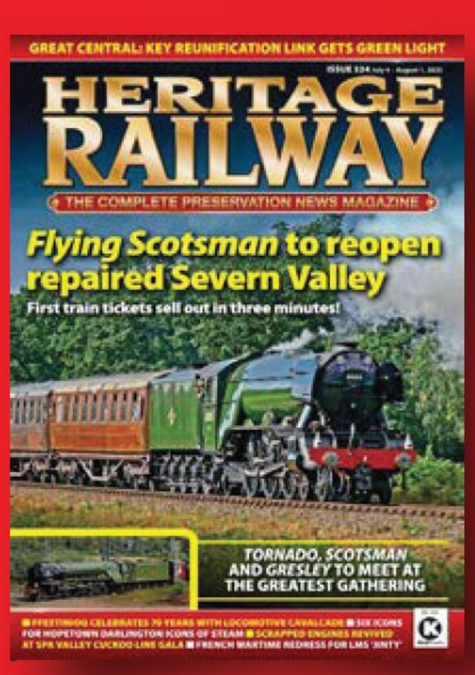
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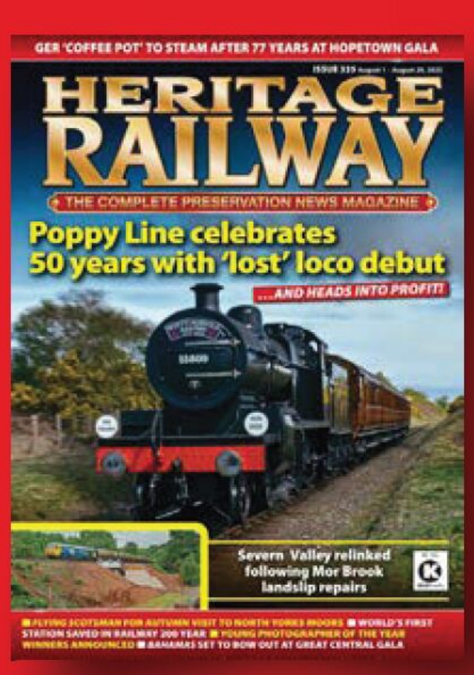
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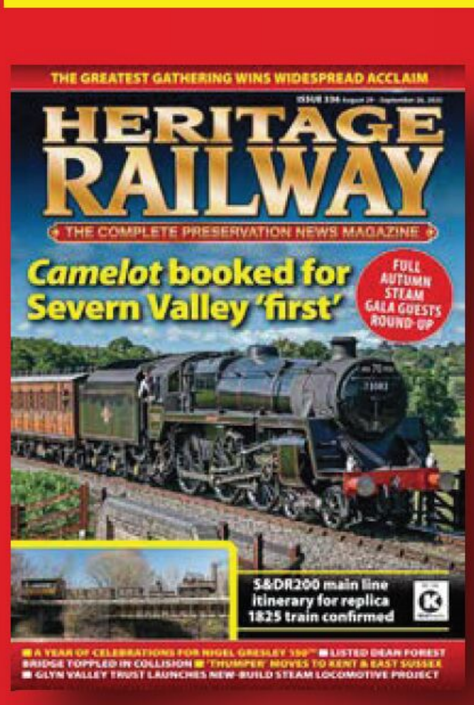
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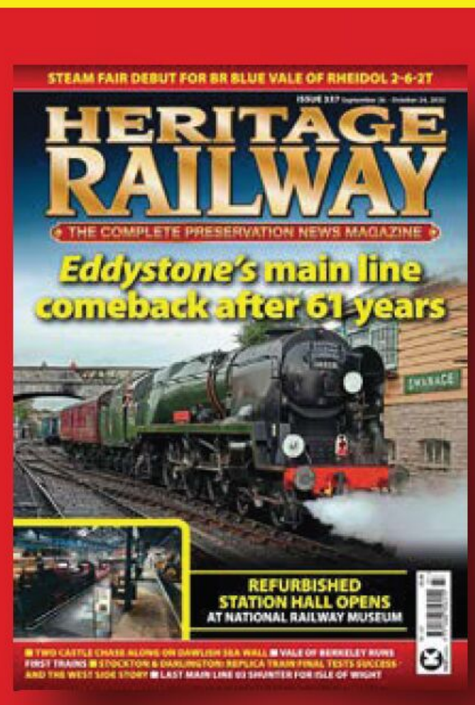
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# More Collection X locos are delivered to Aberystwyth – and two need new homes

**By Robin Jones**

THE latest locomotives from the late Peter Rampton's Collection X have arrived at the Vale of Rheidol Railway's museum in Aberystwyth.

South African Railways NG15 'Kalahari' 2-8-2 No. 121, built by Societe Anglo-France-Belge in 1950, arrived from Surrey by low-loader on December 17. Peter, who had long admired the type, successfully tendered for it in 1993 when it was shipped to the UK and delivered to his Surrey farm.

No. 121 is a sister to No. 134, which has been restored by the Welsh Highland Railway Society and made its first appearance in public service on the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway on June 7/8 last year, and has also been officially named *Kalahari*. Not a Collection X locomotive, No. 134 was initially brought over from South Africa for a failed attempt to build a heritage railway at Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire and along with NGG16s Nos. 87 and 130 was bought for the Welsh Highland in 1998. As reported last issue, it is one of four shortlisted entries for the Steam Locomotive Award in the Heritage Railway Association's Annual Awards 2026.

Prior to No. 121, the previous arrival at Aberystwyth was Falcon Engine & Car Works of Loughborough 4-4-0 'Lawley' Works No. 266 of 1897 *M'Dundo*, which was built for the 2ft gauge Beira Railway in Mozambique and later worked on the country's Buzi Sugar Estates. It was repatriated by Peter Court to Banbury in 1999 before being moved to Rampton's farm on December 20 that year. Peter, heir to the Freemans mail order business and a former chairman of the VoRR, built up a private collection of about 40 locomotives from visits around the world and surrounding which speculation flourished as it was concealed from public view.

As featured in *Heritage Railway* issue 339, the VoRR last year published a 416-hardback volume, Narrow Gauge Enigma: The Story of Peter Rampton and Collection X, detailing it for the first time.





**Above: Falcon 4-4-0 'Lawley' Works No. 266 of 1897 *M'Dundo,* newly arrived at Aberystwyth.** VORR

**Left: NG15 2-8-2 No. 121 delivered to the Vale of Rheidol museum on December 17.**VORR



**In its Indian Railways Eastern Railway livery, AK 16 arrives at Peter Rampton's farm on January 8, 1997.** PETER RAMPTON ARCHIVE



**C Class Pacific No. 666 unloaded at Peter Rampton's Surrey farm in March 1995.** PETER RAMPTON ARCHIVE




**The tender for No. 666 arriving in Surrey.**
BOTH: PETER RAMPTON ARCHIVE

All the planned Collection X moves to Aberystwyth are taking place on a weekly basis and set to be completed by the end of February.

The railway is also seeking new homes for two Collection X locomotives which Peter imported from India and are not considered suitable to fit into the Aberystwyth collection.

The first is North British 2ft 6in gauge C Class Pacific No. 666, built at Atlas Works in Glasgow in 1906 (works number 17111) for the Bengal-Nagpur Railway in India. Repatriated by Peter, it was delivered to his farm in March 1995.

The second locomotive is Indian Railways Delta class 2ft 6in gauge 2-6-2T No. AK 16, built by WG Bagnall as No. 2029 of 1916, after being originally designed to work in Egypt. Acquired by Peter, it arrived at his farm in January 1997.

For more details, contact VORR director, general manager and chief engineer Llŷr ap Iolo by email at Llyr@vor.wales

# Thanksgiving service for Sir Nigel Gresley's 150th anniversary

THE Gresley Society Trust, founded in 1963 to honour the life and works of LNER Chief Mechanical Engineer Sir Nigel Gresley, has announced details of a thanksgiving service and talk on Saturday, April 11 at St Peter's Church, Netherseal, Derbyshire, to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of the legendary railway engineer.

This special event, held close to the 85th anniversary of Sir Nigel's death and burial at the church on April 9, 1941, will begin the trust's year-long celebrations under the banner A Legacy of Innovation, Speed and Elegance.

The service at the church, where Sir Nigel and his wife are buried, will begin at noon, followed by a talk in the nearby village hall exploring Gresley's remarkable life and achievements.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to visit the Gresley family graves. The event is expected to conclude by 4pm.

To enhance accessibility, the society will provide a vintage bus service from Burton-on-Trent and/or Tamworth railway stations.

Trust chairman Philip Benham MBE, FCILT, said: "Sir Nigel Gresley's visionary designs transformed the railway industry and continue to captivate enthusiasts worldwide.

"This thanksgiving service and talk at Netherseal, a place of deep personal significance, is a poignant way to begin our 150th anniversary celebrations, honouring his extraordinary contributions to engineering and his enduring legacy."

The Gresley Society invites members, their guests, and members of the public to join this unique event. To register your interest in attending, including preferences for the potential bus service and preferred station, contact Christopher Clark on christopherseclark@outlook.com

The event is part of a wider programme of celebrations, including a symposium and gala dinner on June 20 at the Mansion House, Doncaster, an exhibition at the Danum Gallery, Doncaster, with part becoming a permanent display, a new plaque unveiling at Doncaster station on June 19, the digitisation of the trust's archive to ensure broader access and long-term preservation, and a short film on Gresley's life and achievements.

There will also be a series of events with partner organisations, including those connected to A4 Pacific No. 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and the LNER Coach Association on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

The trust continues its work preserving Gresley's legacy through the ownership of N2 No. 1744 and Buffet Car No. 1852, with restoration efforts supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund applications.



**The graves of Sir Nigel Gresley and his wife at St Peter's Church, Netherseal.**
TGST



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# Canalside plaque celebrates 250th anniversary of key tramroad pioneer

**By Robin Jones**

AN illustrated panel celebrating the work of civil engineer George Overton, who played key roles in the seeds of what evolved into early steam railways, was unveiled on the towpath of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal on December 8, marking the 250th anniversary of his birth.

Overton's expertise in civil engineering helped shape transport infrastructure in South Wales during the Industrial Revolution. He pioneered tramroads in the 19th century and is renowned for building the˜Penydarren˜Tramroad at Merthyr Tydfil in 1802, on which Richard Trevithick˜gave the world's first public˜demonstration of a steam railway locomotive in 1804.

Said to have been born in 1775 at Cleobury Mortimer, in Herefordshire, he moved to Merthyr Tydfil and worked on the new 4ft 2in gauge Dowlais Tramroad linking Dowlais Ironworks to the Glamorganshire Canal, with horse-drawn wagons moving coal and iron.

In 1818, Overton was consulted by County Durham mine owners and became involved in the roots of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. After two canal schemes failed to get off the ground, Overton recommended a horse-drawn tramway over a 51-mile route.

His survey was the first ever conducted for a railway.

Landowners proved an obstacle, so he carried out more surveys in 1819 and 1820 to shorten the route. His work was taken before Parliament but on the passing of the enabling bill, steam railway pioneer George Stephenson took over and oversaw a new survey – leading to the construction of the line which on September 27, 1825, carried the world's first modern train, as celebrated by Railway 200, of which the canalside panel is part. His last project was Rumney Railway, a plateway from Rhymney Ironworks to the Monmouthshire Canal Tramroad near Newport, and which opened a year after the S&DR.

The plaque was a joint initiative by Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Wales Cymru and the Canal & River Trust and will be available for public viewing in due course. ICE Wales Cymru director Keith Jones said: "George Overton was a remarkable pioneer whose work made an impact in South Wales. His contribution to civil engineering as an ironmaster and tramroad engineer is of national and global significance. We hope the celebration of his work and other pioneers will inspire a new generation of talent to choose a career in rail and to pioneer new innovations in transport infrastructure".

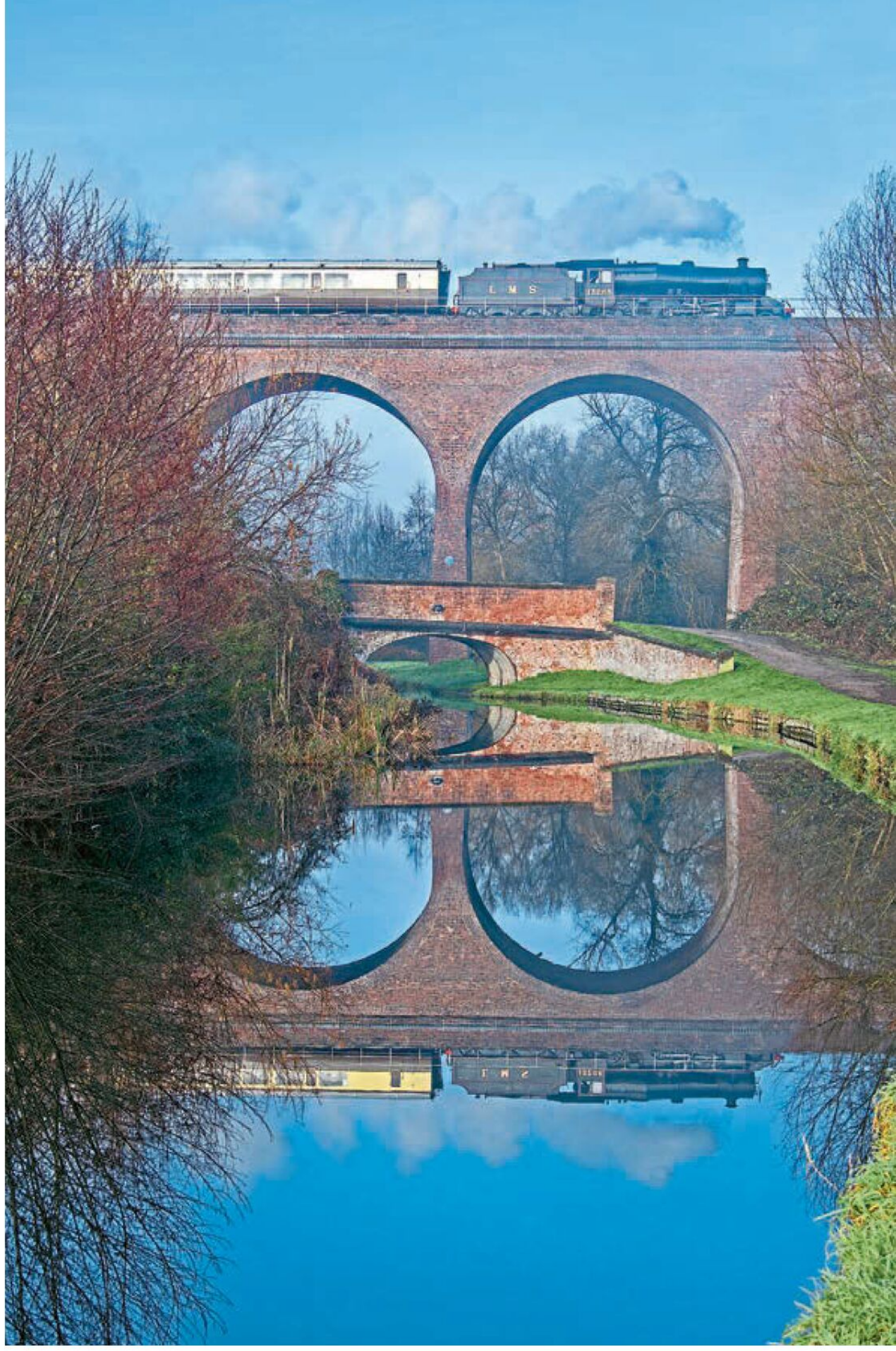
Overton˜lived in Llandetty and died in 1827; he is buried at Llandetty church. Overton Street in Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil, is named after him.




**The panel celebrating the life of tramroad pioneer George Overton.** ICE WALES CYMRU

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**The morning mist is just about clearing as LMS Stanier mogul No. 13268 crosses Falling Sands Viaduct, heading for Kidderminster, on December 13.** JOHN TITLOW

# Branch track lifted for use on nearby heritage replacement

A LONG-ABANDONED short section of the GWR Yelverton branch has been lifted decades after it saw its last train – so the track can be reused on the heritage railway which took its place.

Network Rail has given the track materials to the Plym Valley Railway. The rails and associated infrastructure last served as the rail access to a former china clay works and had long been abandoned following the closure of the works.

This section of track ran from Tavistock Junction through the original GWR Marsh Mills station and then north to the works. However, the construction of the PVR's new Marsh Mills station is on a slightly different alignment and at a different height.

As a result, the length of track was unusable because the PVR station alignment severed this remaining stub from its current running line which follows the old GWR branch north to Plym Bridge Halt, the other end of the PVR line.



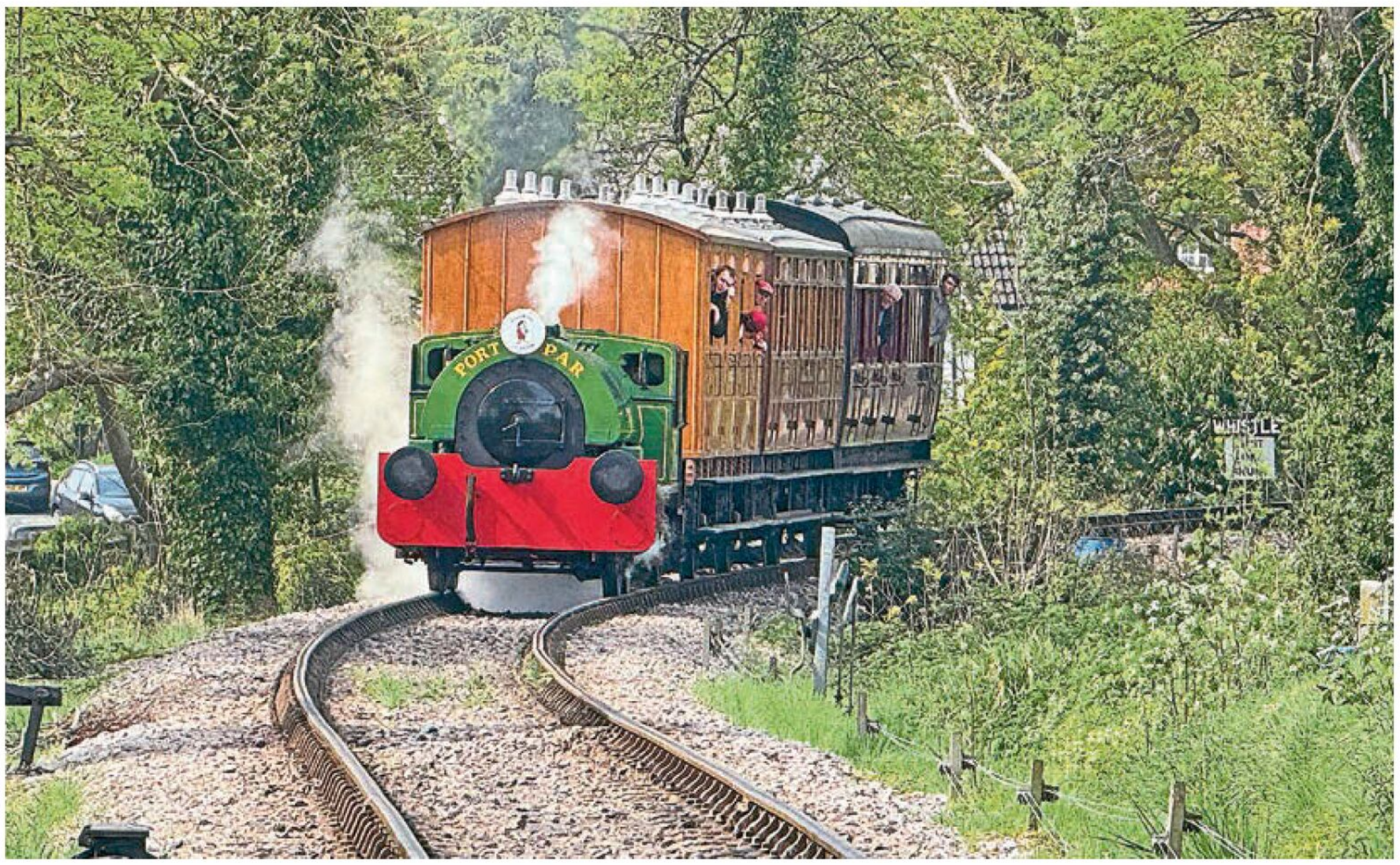
**Track materials being lifted from the long-overgrown Yelverton branch stub.** PVR

To recover it, PVR working members first had to clear the years of vegetation growth before the rails, chairs, and some sleepers can be recovered for further use.

Eric Lobb, the PVR's head of infrastructure, said: "For a heritage railway such as the PVR, such gifts of rails are extremely important as to purchase just a 60ft length of rail is becoming ever more expensive, so a gift such as this from Network Rail means that money can be used on other projects."

# Double award joy – but also a tinge of sadness at the KESR

**By Geoff Courtney**




**Small wonder: Former Par Harbour of Cornwall Bagnall 0-4-0ST *Judy* climbs the bank to Tenterden Town station with a vintage three-car set during the Kent & East Sussex Railway's Dwarves of Steam weekend gala in April last year. The two-day event attracted more than 800 visitors and won for the railway a major Tourism South East gold award, presented to outgoing general manager Robin Coombes at a ceremony in Brighton on December 9.** CAROLINE WARNE

STAFF and volunteers at the Kent & East Sussex Railway had cause to celebrate the new year after learning they had won a prestigious regional event of the year title for its steam gala held last April and also an award for its Wealden Pullman dining trains – although their delight was tempered by having to say farewell to Robin Coombes after the abolition of his general manager post, as reported in last month's issue.

Both awards were announced at a ceremony held by Tourism South East at Brighton on December 9. The gala that won the event of the year title for the KESR was the railway's Dwarves of Steam weekend on April 26/27 – a victory that means it will automatically go through to the nationwide Visit England tourism awards later this year – while the dining train's award was third place in the restaurant of the year category.

Robin, who was attending one of his last public functions on behalf of the railway, was presented with the event of the year gold trophy by Fran Downton, chief executive of Tourism South East, and Brandon James, representing the award sponsor. KESR volunteers Louise Clark and Kevin Bulled accepted the bronze trophy for the dining trains third place from Fran and award sponsor representative Ervin Islamaj.

The KESR was the UK's first heritage railway to offer Pullman dining, 51 years ago, and its reputation is such that its trains, staffed by volunteers in authentic Pullman attire, are often booked many months in advance.

Of the two awards, KESR chairman Derrick Bilsby said: "This is a truly special way for us to end the year. Our customer satisfaction is very much down to the amazing staff and army of volunteers who make the magic happen.

"They are the heart of the railway, so these awards are very much for them."

Fran Downton said that every winner should feel incredibly proud, and awards director Nell Barrington endorsed her praise.

"The winners were outstanding and really show what makes the south east so special," she said. "Huge congratulations to them all."

# Deltic overhaul restarts Napier power unit after 44 years!

DELTIC Preservation Society engineers have successfully started Napier power unit No. 430 after 44 years of dormancy.

The unit was one of five bought by the DPS in 1982 as a float of spare units for the two Class 55 Deltics it purchased that year, Nos. 55009 *Alycidon* and 55019 *Royal Highland Fusilier*. A third, No. 55015 *Tulyar*, was acquired in 1986.

No. 430 was last operational in Class 55 Deltic 55008 *The Green Howards*, when the locomotive's final train was the 1E48 9.20pm Aberdeen to King's Cross (from Edinburgh) on December 29, 1981. No. 55008 was booked to work the final day on December 31 on the 2.03pm King's Cross-York but flat batteries resulted in it staying on Finsbury Park depot, never to run again.

Power unit No. 430 has only 2633 hours on the clock since its last overhaul and having been removed from No. 55004 was installed in No. 55008 in November 1981.




**Power unit No. 430 started inside Deltic No.55009 *Alycidon*.** DPS



**Napier power unit No. 430 at Barrow Hill.** DPS

For many years, it has resided at the Barrow Hill DPS depot only feet away from the No. 2 preserved cab of 55008 *The Green Howards*, the locomotive in which it was once one of the beating hearts. In May 2024, No. 55009 suffered a power unit failure and power unit No. 451 entered a period of inactivity; *Alycidon* was down to one engine. Once again, attention turned to No. 430. Refurbished injectors, fuel pumps, hoses, a completely overhauled zero hours phasing case, and refurbished main and auxiliary generators were fitted at a total cost of about £45,000. No. 430 burst into life on December 10.

No. 55009 will now be tested on the Barrow Hill demonstration line.

Power unit No. 423 will be next in line to be bought back into service and an appeal to raise funds is under way. To donate, visit https://gofund.me/9c2c9f518



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THE STANDARD STEAM LOCOMOTIVE COMPANY

# BUILDING 72010 HENGIST



**The Standard Steam Locomotive Company is a registered heritage charity, set up to recreate a 'lost' Class 6 British Rail Steam Locomotive, called 'Hengist'. The 'lost' locomotive completes the story of the development of the Pacific type of locomotive that began in the UK in 1908.**

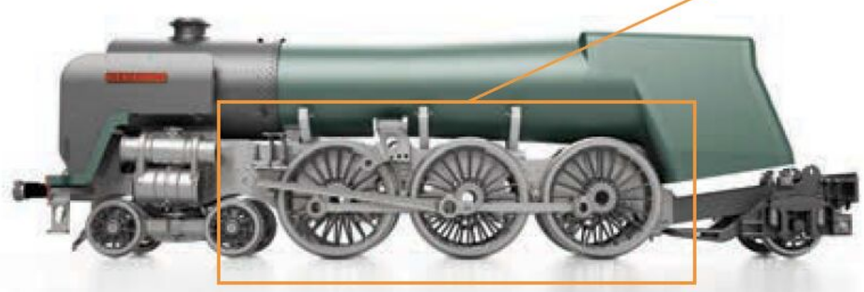


**72010**

**BR CLASS 6**

## ** Latest Project News**

Following on from William Cook donating 6 driving wheels to the value of £140,000, the next phase of work is underway for the coupled wheels. Roller bearings, axles and tyres have now been ordered. Design work on the roller bearing cannon axleboxes is nearing completion. The hind covers for the cylinders have been cast and machined - these feature the support for the front of the slidebars recently installed on 71000 'Duke of Gloucester'. An order has been placed for the casting of the front cylinder covers.







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# Enthusiast pushes to see Gorbals Viaduct repurposed

**By Hugh Dougherty**

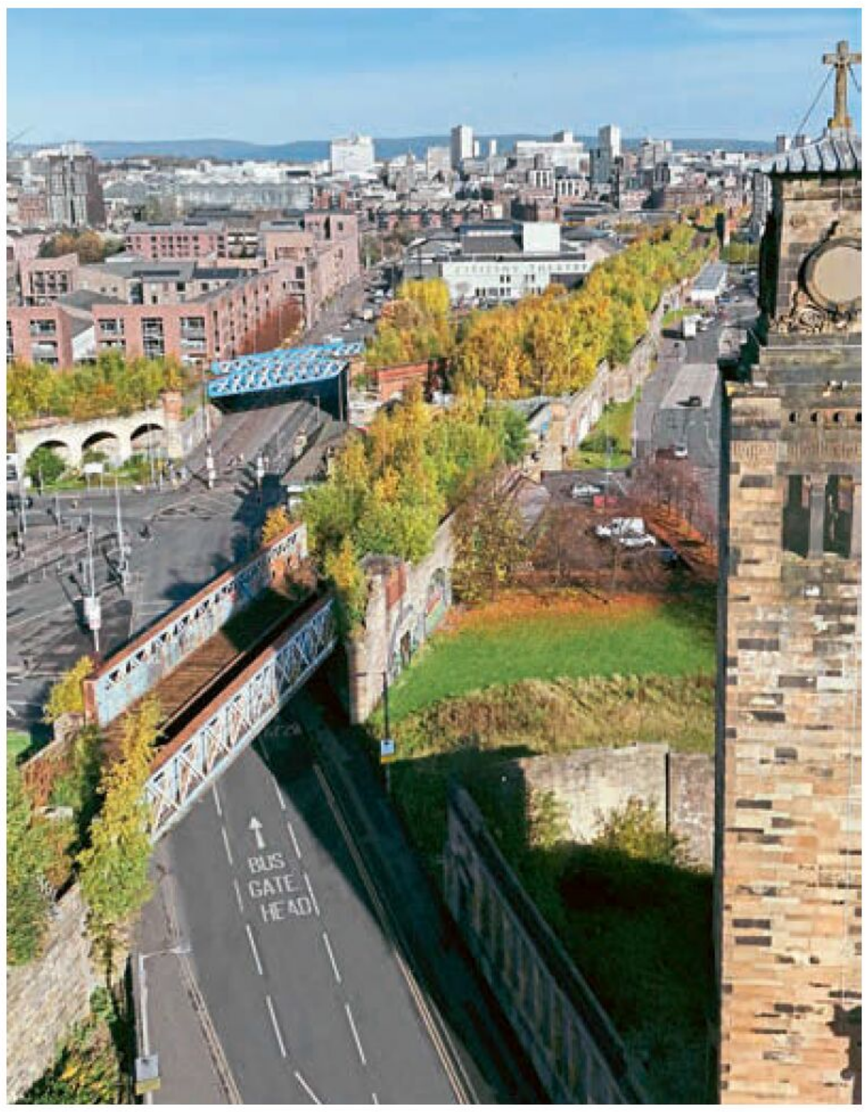
A GLASGOW landscape designer wants to see the 19th century Gorbals Viaduct – which formerly carried the main line of the Glasgow & South Western Railway into St Enoch's station until its closure under the Beeching axe in 1965 – renewed and repurposed.

Jock Breckenridge envisages unlocking the potential of the mile-long viaduct, part of which still carries a double-track line linking Glasgow's north and south railway systems, as a community asset, while celebrating the rich railway heritage of the now largely neglected structure.

Jock said: "I pass the viaduct frequently on my bike and it strikes me that it is an undervalued historical asset.

"Not only is it one of the last Victorian structures left standing in a redeveloped Gorbals, but it is a direct link to the days when trains such as the 'Thames Clyde Express,' the 'Stranraer' and 'Ardrossan' boat trains, the 'Dumfries' expresses, and specials carrying thousands of day trippers and holidaymakers to Clyde resorts such as Ayr, Troon, Saltcoats and Largs made their way over the viaduct. It stood high above the cramped tenements of Gorbals, then home to the Glasgow Irish and Jewish immigrant communities, and would have been busy at night, too, with trains running to and from College Street goods station.

"We must record and honour those days by properly conserving the viaduct."




**Looking along the length of the viaduct showing unchecked tree growth. Jock says that "this could be turned into an urban park, sharing space with the remaining Network Rail running lines – yes, they're really there on the left!"** JOCK BRECKENRIDGE



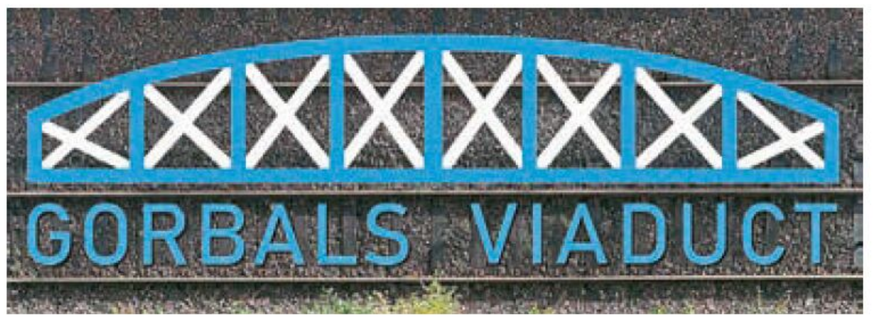
**Looking towards St Enoch, the Gorbals Viaduct and the land around it is clearly in need of restoration as a Victorian railway survivor, says Jock.** HUGH DOUGHERTY



**The project wants to restore the abandoned Cumberland Street station buildings as a community hub and heritage centre, with railway heritage to the fore. The bridge, which carries the live line to and from Shields Traction Depot, is the basis of the project logo.** HUGH DOUGHERTY



**Clyde Junction: Where the main lines from Kilmarnock on the right and from the Clyde Coast met, with the access stairs to Gorbals station visible. Jock says that the viaduct needs to be properly restored.** HUGH DOUGHERTY




**A logo for the project using one of the girder bridges crossing Cumberland Street.** JOCK BRECKENRIDGE

## Nature taking hold

The structure consists of a series of arches, housing businesses and two popular pubs below them, carrying four tracks with girder bridges over major streets, and was opened in 1871 by the City of Glasgow Union Railway. It came into its own when the Glasgow & South Western Railway opened St Enoch Station in 1976 and was busy until the closure of the terminal in 1965. Since then, the viaduct, which is owned by Network Rail, has carried rolling stock transfer trains to and from Shields Traction Depot and the occasional freight working over the remaining double track. The former adjacent tracks have been lifted and the trackbed has disappeared under 60 years of mature tree growth, while the section which formerly led to Strathbungo station, and the main line south to Dumfries, has become overwhelmed by trees and bushes.

It also carries the remains of Gorbals station, open from 1871 to 1929, and the stairways to and from the former platforms can still be found by enthusiasts and local historians in the know. Jock wants what is seen as one of Glasgow's long-lost stations to be better known as part of the project.

"There's also the abandoned Cumberland Street building at street level," said Jock.

"I'd like to see the building, built in good-quality sandstone, restored and used as a community hub and heritage centre, giving due prominence, of course, to the railway's history and heritage as an integral part of Gorbals for more than a century and a half.

## Community links

"My plans for redesigning the unused trackbed, currently lost under unchecked undergrowth, include clearing the wilderness to allow community access to a developed linear park, much like New York's High Line, and putting a sadly neglected piece of historic railway infrastructure to good use.

"The lightly used running lines can be securely fenced off, so there is no conflict of interest. Castlefield Viaduct in Manchester follows a similar approach."

Jock is working hard to raise community support for the plans and is talking to Network Rail, local heritage groups and possible funding partners.

He is also appealing for help from *Heritage Railway* readers with tracking down pictures of the railway in action. "I've been able to access plenty of historic maps," he said, "but it's proving harder to source pictures of the line in action. There are plenty of shots of trains in and around St Enoch Station, but few, if any, of trains on the viaduct itself, as it wasn't easily accessible from street level.

"If any readers can help with picture or memories of the line in action, I'd be delighted to hear from them. My e-mail address is jockbreckenridge@gmail.com and my Instagram is jock_breckenridge_design."



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**No. 945 on Pickering turntable on May 11, 2023.** MARCUS WOODCOCK

# Further carriage moves as NER Open Third goes to Kirkby Stephen East

THE LNER Coach Association and the Stainmore Railway Company have agreed to work together to complete the restoration of NER-designed Open Third No. 945 and rehome it at Kirkby Stephen East.

No. 945 is currently at Rampart Engineering at Barrow Hill, where it was shortly due to have a mechanical overhaul, including bogies, brake system, gangways and steam heat, along with work on the panelling. Once that work is complete, it will be available for traffic; further internal works will be carried out in due course.

Ownership of No. 945 will remain with LNERCA, which also owns NER Luggage Composite No. 1111 of 1890 and Gresley Corridor Brake Third No. 3669 of 1930, both already located at Kirkby Stephen East.

Built at York Works in 1924, No. 945 was completed by the LNER to NER Diagram 155, with standard LNER features; no end windows, Gresley bogies, and Pullman gangways. It was lined in NER fashion (to match the style of mouldings) but lettered




**A colourised picture of NER No. 945 ex works in 1924.** NRM

LNER and carrying large '3' numbers on the doors rather than 'Third.' It was given the 'Y' suffix to the number to specify that it was York-built. Later, the LNER adopted a '2' prefix for ex-NER carriages and it became No. 2945. Evidence is compelling that it was finished in varnished teak when built. Several original panels on the carriage removed in the 1970s were teak, and it is unlikely that York Carriage Works would have painted those.

The carriage was originally rescued by the North Eastern Carriage Group in 1973 from departmental use at Leeds (then numbered DE 320716) and was slowly restored at Goathland and later at Levisham on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. Ownership transferred to the LNERCA in January 2023 when the NERCG was wound up.

The volunteer-run Stainmore Railway Company aims to restore the station as an authentic NER-focused heritage centre representing the early 1950s. A quantity of rolling stock that is authentic to the site has also been brought in, including four NER six-wheeled coaches for restoration.




**Puffing Billy Railway 2-6-2T No. 12A marks the 125th anniversary event.** PBR

# Puffing Billy celebrates 125th anniversary

AUSTRALIA'S Puffing Billy Railway celebrated its 125th anniversary during an inaugural Community Open Day on December 14.

Complimentary train services were available for residents living within a 10km radius of any of the Victoria 2ft 6in gauge line's stations, while community groups hosted a wide range of activities to celebrate the line's history at stations on the line.

The line operated in the southern foothills of the Dandenong Rangers in Melbourne and is twinned with the Talyllyn Railway.

It was saved by the Puffing Billy Preservation Society, which was formed on October 1, 1955.

Reopened in 1962, the line carries more than 487,000 passengers each year, and seats on it are sold out months in advance.

Particularly popular are its NBH open sided carriages that allow passengers to sit on the side and dangle their legs off the moving train, a tradition that has existed since the introduction of the carriages in 1918/19 by Victorian Railways.

# NCB Barclay tank back on show in mining territory

A BARCLAY 0-4-0ST has been returned to static display in Fife's Lochore Meadows Country Park, near Longelly, following cosmetic restoration.

No. 2259 of 1949 National Coal Board Fife Area No. 30 worked at Frances Colliery at Dysart in Fife. Out of use in the 1970s, it was sold to Fife Regional Council after 1982 and plinthed in the 1200-acre park beside Loch Ore which encompasses the site of the former Glencraig Colliery site.

In July 2021, the locomotive was taken to Smeaton Engineering in Kirkcaldy for cosmetic restoration.

Originally scheduled to be reinstated on November 19 as part of the new mining heritage display launch, No. 30 was returned to storage due to technical issues with lifting equipment. Smeaton Services Fife Ltd successfully brought it back to the country park on December 12, completing the vision for the heritage area beside the iconic Mary Pit Wheel.

As the park preserves its mining heritage, No. 30 forms a key part of the Save The Cage project which recently created an outdoor display of coal mining artefacts loaned by the National Mining Museum Scotland, including a miner's cage, man-riding bogies, roof supports and coal-cutting machinery – telling the story of life for those working underground.

Coun Alex Campbell, convenor of Fire Council's Cowdenbeath Area Committee, said: "The return of the train is the finishing touch to this fantastic heritage display and a wonderful way to celebrate our mining legacy. It's something that will delight visitors for years to come."




**Cosmetically restored Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 2259 back at Lochore Meadows Country Park, where it is now on static display.** FIFE COUNCIL

A statement from the Friends of Lochore Meadows group went on to add: "Seeing the train back in place is a proud moment for everyone who has supported this project and shows what can be achieved when communities and partners work together to keep history alive."

## Calls for new Railways Bill to restore network services to Oswestry

**MAIN line train services to Oswestry should be restored under the new Railways Bill, an MP said in the House of Commons during a debate on December 9.**

**The Liberal Democrat MP for North Shropshire, Helen Morgan, said: "In constituencies such as North Shropshire, where access to the railway is very poor indeed, we have initiatives for step-free access at Whitchurch station and to connect Oswestry, which is the second largest town in Shropshire but has no rail connection, to the line at Gobowen.**

**"Does my hon. friend agree that the bill really needs to take up those types of opportunities? Otherwise, many people will fail to recognise the benefits of hopefully improving the rail system."**

### Neglected regions

**Liberal Democrat spokesman Olly Glover responded: "She is quite right to point out that some of the more sparsely populated parts of our country have been neglected in their rail offer. It is important that the spending recognises that and does not just follow large towns or cities or inter-city routes."**

**The Railways Bill aims to establish Great British Railways as a new body responsible for both infrastructure and most passenger services in England.**

**As reported last issue, in the National Railway Heritage Awards 2025 programme, Shropshire Council won The BAM Nuttall Partnership Award for the greatest heritage improvement works made to any historic railway structure as part of a jointly-funded project, was for work undertaken on the Grade II-listed headquarters of the Cambrian Railways at Oswestry, now the centrepiece of the Cambrian Heritage Railways which occupies the ground floor.**

**Oswestry station opened on May 1, 1860, and closed to passengers on November 7, 1966, and to freight in 1971. Heritage services started in 2014.**

# Scottish delights at Spa Valley Railway

**By Geoff Courtney**

THE genteel Kent town of Tunbridge Wells – which is so thoroughly English that in 1909 it was granted royal status by King Edward VII – will reverberate to the joys of Scottish culture on January 24 when the birthday of one of most revered icons north of the border, poet and lyricist Robert 'Rabbie' Burns, will be celebrated in true Burns Night style.

That culture will be an integral part of an evening organised by the Spa Valley Railway, to include a piper performing traditional Scottish classics with support from a fiddler and accordionist, and the supply of what many understandably regard as Scotland's greatest export – a dram or two of whisky.

And as if such attractions aren't enough for railway enthusiasts, there is the bonus of a Scottish-built steam locomotive hauling the evening's two Tunbridge Wells West-Eridge and return trips, ex-Caledonian Railway 812 class 0-6-0 No. 828 (BR No. 57566), one of whose carriages will be bar car *Kate* dispensing whisky on board.

The evening, which Spa Valley general manager Jonnie Pay describes as a "distinctive and unique opportunity to honour Burns Night amid the elegance of steam train travel," will start at 6.30pm when the bar will open in the railway's 1891-built ex-LBSCR engine shed (coded 75F by BR) after a welcome by a piper.



**Scottish star: Former Caledonian Railway No. 828 heads through the evening twilight at Pokehill Farm crossing with a Spa Valley Eridge-Tunbridge Wells West train. The 0-6-0 will be one of the attractions at the railway's Burns Night celebrations on January 24.** ANDREW EDKINS

Once on board, passengers will enjoy a four-course meal, central to which will be a toast to the haggis, all against the background of live Scottish music provided by the fiddler and accordionist, and there will be another performance at the national network station of Eridge, five miles up the line from Tunbridge Wells West, before the journey back to Tunbridge Wells.

The festivities will end at Tunbridge Wells at 9.30pm following the return of the second trip from Eridge. Tickets are available from the railway at £70 per adult and £45 for children aged from 12.



**The flames destroy the interior of the cabin.** JIM DEEGAN



**The cabin before the fire, with the clock and train staff instrument to the fore.** JIM DEEGAN



**The charred remains show how much damage was done.** JIM DEEGAN

# History repeats itself at Maam Cross as fire ravages signal cabin ahead of Connemara Santa season

**By Hugh Dougherty**

HISTORY repeated itself when Maam Cross signal cabin caught fire on Saturday December 13, just as Connemara Railway volunteers were preparing to run Santa trains. A faulty stove caused the recently built replica cabin to be badly damaged, the coincidence being that the original was burned to the ground in 1922 during the Irish Civil War.

Railway chief Jim Deegan said: "We were just about to start running our 3ft gauge trains as Santa specials when the blaze started. Despite the best efforts of our volunteers, including Santa himself armed with a fire extinguisher, we needed professional assistance from the fire service, which manged to save parts of the cabin.

"We lost our original railway clock and our train staff apparatus, while all the woodwork was destroyed and the lever frame also suffered. It's a great loss of the cabin, which was our pride and joy."

However, Jim said that the railway is determined to restore the burnt-out shell and has launched a 50,000 Euro appeal to have it back in action by the spring or summer and to allow it to reopen fully.

"If any readers would like to help, we'd be very grateful and delighted if they would like to send donations, however large or small, to our special signal cabin donation page on our website at www.connemararailway.ie,"he said.

And, in a final twist of fate, Jim said: "The Irish name for Maam Cross is An Teach Doite, and that means – wait for it – the burnt house!"



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# ‘A fantastic outcome’ as Bishop Lydeard’s Gauge Museum is awarded national accreditation

THE Gauge Museum at Bishops Lydeard on the West Somerset Railway has just been awarded full accreditation by the Arts Council.

The museum, which is run by the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust and is based in the former goods shed which closed in 1964, holds a wide range of artefacts which display and tell the story of the history and heritage of both the Minehead branch and the GWR.

Accreditation means that the Gauge Museum is properly managed and governed to the nationally agreed industry standard and shows the museum takes proper care of its collections, sharing them with visitors and keeping them safe for future generations. It opens up funding opportunities, allowing museums to host touring exhibitions, and gives access to professional advice, while giving confidence to donors and sponsors who may wish to support the museum.

Between 2019 and 2022, the museum underwent a major reinterpretation with a significant grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is currently the subject of further plans for development.

Steve Williams, the trust’s vice chairman and accreditation lead, said: “This is a fantastic outcome for the trust and marks the combination of three years of hard work by a small and dedicated team of volunteers, many of whom now make up our museum management team.”

Trustee and museum curator Ian Camp said: “This achievement represents a significant milestone for our museum. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Rachel Bellamy, our museum development officer, whose support and guidance have been invaluable throughout this process. Her expertise has helped steer us in the right direction and ensured that we met the necessary standards for accreditation. Securing this recognition marks another important step towards fulfilling our vision of being a professional museum, managed and operated by a group of passionate and committed volunteers.”




**The Gauge Museum at Bishops Lydeard station.** LAURA STANDERWICK/WSR

Having gained accreditation for the Gauge Museum, during 2026 the trust will pursue a similar outcome for its other site at Blue Anchor station on the WSR, which is now open to visitors again following an extensive programme of refurbishment and reinterpretation.

# Seven years to catch a Shark as restoration nears end point

**By John Titlow**

IT has taken nearly seven years for a dedicated team of six core volunteers to restore to full working order 20-ton Shark ballast plough brake van No. DB993898 at Bridgnorth on the Severn Valley Railway.

More than 200 were built at various locations, with DB993898 produced by the Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Company at Smethwick in 1957.

This particular example was based at Lydney on the Western Region; the DB prefix indicates Departmental vehicle built by BR.

Sharks were attached to the rear of ballast trains and used to spread the material after it had been dropped. Each plough could be raised or lowered as required according to the direction of travel.

Withdrawn from service at Tinsley in 1990, it was bought by SVR members Les Johnson and John Hancock, arriving on the SVR that same year minus its ploughs. The ploughs were acquired after the closure of the Duddeston Wagon Shops in Birmingham and was fitted in 1993. Soon after, it entered SVR service on permanent way duties.

## Active duty

In 1996, rotten woodwork was repaired and replaced and after three months it re-entered traffic for a ballast drop that October. The owners donated it to the SVR Charitable Trust in 2016, ensuring its long-term place as part of the SVR’s wagon fleet. Continuing work into 2017, it was withdrawn from service around that time as the SVR started moving over to using air-braked stock on P-Way trains. The latest rebuild started in 2019 in the cattle dock at Bridgnorth by volunteers from the carriage and wagon team, with occasional assistance from paid staff. Furlough slowed progress considerably and during 2020 it was discovered to be a much more complicated job.

The corner posts, waist rail, external cladding, balcony floors and the majority of the sole plate which sits on the steel frame needed renewal. As work progressed, further works were discovered. Its underframe is in good condition and repainted but will be inspected before re-entering service.

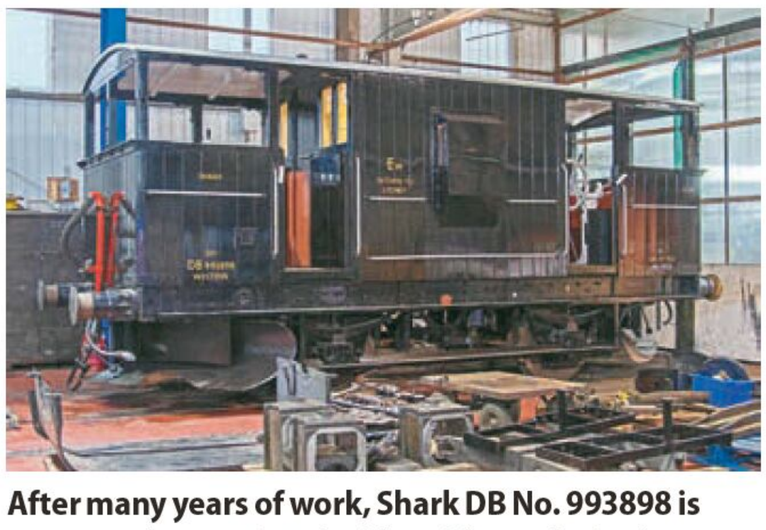
Additional work took place in 2025 when air braking was fitted, making it a dual-braked vehicle. Despite it not being the only Shark on the SVR or in preservation, it is a valuable working asset for the railway.

At present, it is uncertain if it will continue doing the job it was designed for or if it will go on display at the Engine House Museum at Highley; there are friendly mixed feelings within the group on this.

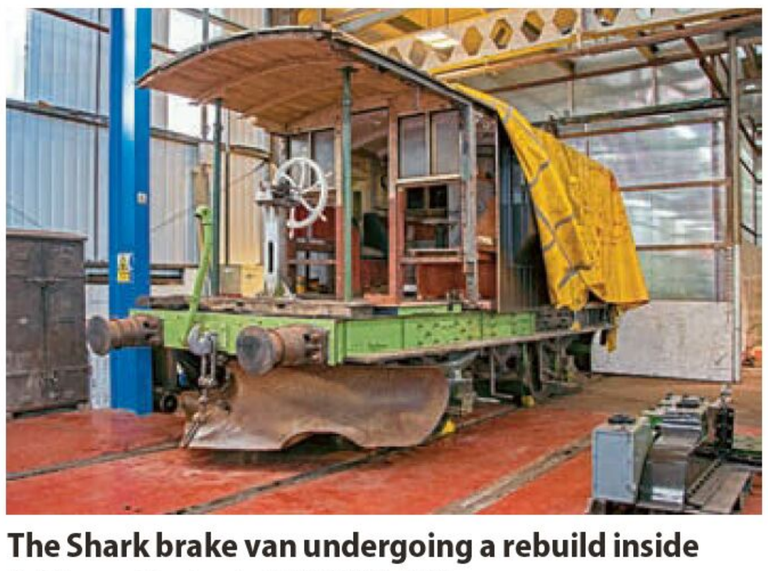
A member of the SVR since 1972, team leader Cedric Jameson will retire now the restoration is virtually complete.

## Next project

Meanwhile, the team has made a start on Southern Railway luggage van No. 1174. Based on a 1921 South East and Chatham Railway design, it was designated a Parcels and Miscellaneous Van (PMV) by the Southern Railway and used to carry livestock, newspapers, mail and parcels on Express Passenger services, hence the XP lettering on the side.



**After many years of work, Shark DB No. 993898 is seen nearly complete inside Bridgnorth shed on December 12.** JOHN TITLOW



**The Shark brake van undergoing a rebuild inside Bridgnorth shed.** JOHN TITLOW



**Southern Railway luggage van No. 1174 inside Bridgnorth shed.** JOHN TITLOW

# ‘La’al Ratty’ celebrates 150 years since fi rst passengers

**By Robin Jones**



***Northern Rock* will celebrate its 50th birthday in 2026.** MARK FIELDING/RER

THE Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway has arranged a programme of special events to mark 150 years of carrying passengers.

Two of the 15in gauge steam locomotives also have major birthdays in 2026. *Northern Rock*, designed by former Chief Engineer Ian Smith and built in the Ravenglass workshop, entered service in 1976. The 2-6-2 turns 50 this year, and its golden jubilee will be celebrated with a dedicated gala weekend on May 2-4.

The Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway Preservation Society’s popular 2-8-2 *River Mite*, built by Clarksons of York in 1966, will also celebrate its 60th anniversary.

On March 14-22, La’al Ratty will stage a special week dedicated to a hands-on introduction to narrow gauge steam engine driving. Participants, who must be aged 21 or above, can learn the basics on the footplate from an experienced driver before taking the controls for a 40-minute trip from Ravenglass to Irton Road and back. Each participant may bring up to eight spectator guests to ride in first class carriage No. 140 for an extra fee, with afternoon tea included in the experience.



***River Mite,* which turns 60 this year.** BEN BARDEN/RER

From March 30 to April 12, a series of Easter family fun activities will be staged across the line and in the Ravenglass Railway Museum.

On April 8/9, Chris Vine, author of Peter’s Railway, will host a series of Easter Little Engineers’ Days, perfect for budding engineers, featuring hands-on railway learning, demonstrations, storytelling and themed activities.

The RER was built to 3ft˜gauge and opened on May 24, 1875, to transport hematite iron ore˜from three mines near and around the village of Boot to the Furness Railway at Ravenglass. Following requests from local residents, it was upgraded to passenger-carrying standard. When it carried its first passengers in 1876, it became the first public narrow gauge railway in England.

However, the railway ran at a loss following the closure of the mines, and in 1908 the Board of Trade declared it to be unsafe for passengers, and it closed completely in April 1913. The line was taken over by model maker Wenman Joseph Bassett-Lowke and his business partner Robert Proctor-Mitchel in 1915, who converted it to 15in gauge.

In the mid-1920s, it was taken over by Sir Aubrey Brocklebank, the owner of the quarry at Beckfoot, who extended the line.

In 1949, the railway was sold to the Keswick Granite Company and in September 1960 was bought at auction by the newly formed Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway Preservation Society.

**➜ For more details of the anniversary events and to book, visit https://ravenglass-railway.co.uk/ or telephone 01229 717171.**

# ‘Flying Scotsman’ derailment play set to be restaged

A PLAY telling the story of the derailment of the ‘Flying Scotsman’ train during the General Strike of 1926 is to be staged at Newcastle Theatre Royal on July 12.

The Cramlington Train Wreckers is one of two events organised by Northumberland-born playwright Ed Waugh to mark the centenary of the strike.

The play was a sell-out success and received widespread critical acclaim when it toured seven venues in 2024.

It tells how, seven days into the strike, eight Northumberland miners mistakenly derailed the train headed by A3 Pacific No. 2565 *Merry Hampton* on May 10, 1926, between Annitsford and Cramlington when they had set out to target a blackleg coal train.

To stop the coal train, the Cramlington miners had unbolted a rail on the East Coast Main Line.

There were 281 passengers aboard the ‘Flying Scotsman’ when the locomotive and five carriages came off the tracks. However, because the driver had been warned of trouble ahead and slowed down, no one was killed.

One man sustained a minor foot injury, while most passengers were treated for shock and bruises and then continued their journey from Newcastle.

The eight miners were each sentenced to up to eight years for their involvement in the event.

Incarcerated in Maidstone Prison in Kent, they were allowed only a single one-hour annual visit a year with their loved ones, who had to travel 300 miles.



**A3 Pacific No. 2565 *Merry Hampton* and its train following the derailment on May 10, 1926.**

The miners were eventually released early due to pressure from the trade union rank and file, politicians, and the judiciary itself, which considered the sentences too severe. They returned home to a heroes’ welcome.

Ewan Waugh’s other show about the strike, Centenary, featuring songs, comedy sketches, and recitations, will be held at The Glasshouse in Gateshead on May 4, exactly 100 years since the first day of the nine-day stoppage.

For more details about the play and to book, visit www.cramlingtontrainwreckers.co.uk



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# Veteran Simplexes retro-fitted 1960s-style ready for 2026 events programme on the Lincolnshire coast

**By Chris Bates**



**Undercoat applied to the bodywork of Simplex No. 3995 *Paul*.** CHRIS BATES



***Paul* in undercoat and rubbed-down paintwork and later blue with volunteer Matthew Forman-Clarke working on Nocton's bodywork in the background.** CHRIS BATES

TWO veteran Motor Rail Simplex diesels are being retro-fitted on the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway for significant anniversaries in 2026.

Both may be older than their official build dates and will be seen in widely varying appearances.

This year will be the 110th anniversary of Bedford-based Motor Rail's first construction of its legendary Simplex locomotives – petrol powered then – produced for the War Department Light Railway's narrow gauge lines in the First World War battlefields.

No. 3995 *Paul* is having its metal body restored to the condition created by a metalworking firm on Grimsby Docks – more used to dealing with trawlers and the fishing industry. It pulled the world's first passenger service on a heritage railway to be built by enthusiasts on a greenfield site, from Humberston North Sea Lane station (south of Cleethorpes) to its Beach terminus. It was the sole operable motive power on the line until the arrival from Rugby Portland Cement, at Southam, Warwickshire, of Peckett 0-6-0ST No.1008 of 1903 *Jurassic* the following summer – at which point the Simplex promptly broke down. The Peckett was steamed to run trains for the days it took to repair the Simplex (a 1956 copy of the *Daily Sketch* from the last day of operations at Southam was found in 1961 in the coal bunker – and promptly used to light the fire).

At the time, the bow-framed Simplex did not have glazing in its cab windows and was fitted with a cab door, which proved to be of an encumbrance than anything.

It worked on the Humberston line until closure in 1985, gradually supplemented by other Simplexes, but remained and is a firm favourite with volunteers on the LCLR's current site in the Skegness Water Leisure Park. For its centenary, its current glazing and nameplates are being removed; its paintwork is being rubbed down and undecorated, revealing the light blue in which the docks firm painted it, and then the later Seinette blue in which two of the surviving original volunteers remember it.

While it was later repainted in a darker blue, then green, and the marine blue which it has carried until the present work began, LCLR Historic Vehicles Trust secretary Tim Drury, a former fisherman, discovered that a firm, Teamac Marine Paints, still manufactures Seinette blue; approaches are being made to arrange a supply.

## Oddball cab

The original 'garden shed' wooden cab survived as a rudimentary shelter near the original passing loop adjacent to Courting Couple Halt in the 1960s.

Meanwhile, the trust is exploring the possibility of loaning it to the Apedale Valley Light Railway for its planned June 27/28 Motor Railway Mania event, celebrating the anniversary of the first Simplex. It is fitted with a dump vale, enabling it to work with an air-braked loco on passenger trains.

Trust chairman Richard Shepherd believes that the locomotive may date to 1918, when Motor Rail bought back from the WDLR several Simplexes damaged in the war or not delivered because of the Armistice.

He said: "They were brought up to as-new condition and allocated new builders' numbers and sold in that condition to buyers – such as the Nocton Estates Railway in Lincolnshire, where our loco – and the one we now call *Nocton* – operated on that 23-mile-long 60cm gauge line, linking farmland between Bardney and Nocton, until being bought by the LCLR."

The second Simplex enjoying a retro-fit is works No. 1935 *Nocton,* which was bought in the early 1970s and immediately put to work with its original 'garden shed' wooden cab and no other bodywork except metal bonnets protecting the engine and transmission. This locomotive is also thought to have been one of the First World War batch, bought back and then supplied as an 'as new' machine.

Eventually, it was fitted with a rather ugly LCLR-made wooden body – cab and body – with which it ran until removed a few years ago at Skegness, when it was restored as an open cab locomotive. However, over the past year, volunteer Roger Lusby, a retired master joiner, has been building a replica wooden cab at his home in Grimsby. The structure is now on *Nocton* and work is so advanced that it's now being undercoated, ready for gloss painting in a shade of green thought to be as near to that carried by Nocton Estate locomotives as anyone can judge.

It too has a date on June 27, the official centenary of its sibling, when the LCLR will stage a Narrow Gauge At Work event which, it is hoped, will feature an authentic Nocton Estates train of First World War vehicles from the LCLR's unique collection, as well as (it is also hoped) a train of V-skips borrowed from Colin Copcutt's Silverleaf Poplar Railway, at Old Leake, near Boston. The LCLR is hoping for a return of Trixie, the horse trained on the Old Leake line to pull railway vehicles – a hugely popular attraction when she visited the LCLR in 2025.

## Vast appeal

Richard said the LCLR's collection of antique Simplexes, its ex-First World War vehicles, its collection, and newly opened station at Seathorne Bank (shortlisted in the Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards 2026 Station of the Year category (as reported last issue) are attracting visitors from all over the UK but also a steadily increasing number of volunteers, including younger and recent retirees, whose work is enabling the railway to undertake more and more ambitious projects. Working parties are normally held on Wednesdays and Saturdays in the closed season.

**➜ Richard said that the diesel engine in No. 3995 is unique: a Dorman 2DW, replacing the original petrol 2JO. It has a Ricardo head, reputedly easier to start than the standard Dorman 2DW, both of which used wicks which had to be lit, inserted, and then the engine swung before going from low-compression to high. The LCLR has the original paperwork from the visit of Motor Rail engineers to Nocton in 1932/33 to fit the diesel power units. No. 3995 was named *Paul* as there was an 0-4-0ST Bagnall named *Peter* stored on the original LCLR by its owner, the Narrow Gauge Railway Society. It eventually moved to the Amberley Museum, where it has been restored to running order. It never ran at Humberston.**

## Bo'ness Standard 4MT needs boiler lift just two years after overhaul

**THE owning group of BR Standard 4MT 2-6-4T No. 80105 has issued an update on the withdrawal of the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway-based locomotive which, as reported last issue, scuppered its year-long loan to the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway.**

**During a routine boiler inspection of No. 80105 at Bo'ness, several unexpected firebox issues were identified, so Locomotive Owners Group Scotland Ltd (LOGS ) accordingly withdrew it from traffic pending a detailed inspection to specify the remedial work required.**

**"Work to rectify these issues will be significant and require a boiler lift,"said Rod Harrison, on behalf of LOGS.**

**"LOGS directors are currently exploring options for the boiler work to be undertaken. Due to current engineering priorities at Bo'ness, work on No. 80105 is unlikely to take place on site."**

# Landmark Scottish viaduct collapses after 139 years

**By Robin Jones**

SCOTLAND'S historic Spey Viaduct – which was built to carry the Great North of Scotland Railway's Moray coast line between Portsoy and Elgin – has been cordoned off by police after partially collapsing into the river below.

Completed in 1886, the 950ft nine-arch iron girder structure over the River Spey, near Garmouth in Moray, is popular with cyclists and walkers. Also known as Garmouth Viaduct, it includes a 350ft-long wrought-iron lattice bow girder span over the main channel of the river.

After the railway closed to passengers in 1968 and freight in 1971 and the tracks were lifted from the viaduct, it was considered too costly and dangerous to dismantle. Later paved, it became part of the National Cycle Network's NCN1 route.

The structure is now maintained by Moray Council purely as a footbridge and for access from Garmouth to Spey Bay. The long-distance Speyside Way trail, which follows the River Spey from Spey Bay to Ballindalloch, passes the east end of the bridge.

The collapse left one of its supporting stone piers leaning at an angle and part of the metalwork twisted, having fallen into the river. A council statement said: "Moray Council engineers have now assessed the Garmouth Viaduct and on initial inspection can confirm the collapse appears to be due to scour. At the time of the last scour report by a specialist contractor in 2023, there was no evidence of scour.

"It appears over the last year, the river flow path has changed, which may have contributed to a change of impact on the piers. We are in the process of instructing a specialist engineer to undertake a more detailed inspection and assessment.

"In the immediate future, the area around the structure will be made safe, with clean-up works to avoid further damage and further detailed inspections necessary by a specialist contractor to determine any other works required.

"The longer-term future of the bridge will be considered in the new year after the initial clear-up operation, with options presented to councillors as soon as practicably possible.

"We are well aware of the strength of feeling in the local community and further afield for this bridge and how well used it is by walkers and cyclists. We are installing more robust fencing around the bridge to ensure the safety of the public. The message remains for members of the public to avoid the immediate area, both on land and river users, and not to climb on any part of the bridge for their own safety. While we understand residents are keen to photograph this historical moment in the life history of the bridge, it's not safe to go under the bridge or climb the structure at this time.

"There is no immediate solution to get the bridge in a sufficient state to reopen. Specialist contractors will need to be brought in for the clean-up operation and to determine next steps. As the bridge spans the fastest-flowing river in Scotland, accessing the underwater areas is dangerous and requires specialist contractors and equipment. The initial work taking place will be dependent on availability of resources and funding."

The 107-mile-long River Spey, the ninth longest in the UK, is considered important for salmon fishing and whisky production.



**The partially-collapsed Spey Viaduct on December 15.** MORAY COUNCIL




**The Greatest Gathering, 2025 – oil on canvas official artwork.** TIM O'BRIEN




**Pete Waterman OBE (left) and Andy Butters, managing director of Alstom's Litchurch Lane works, unveil Tim O'Brien's artwork.** ALSTOM

# The Greatest Gathering is immortalised in artwork

THE Greatest Gathering's official artwork – a large oil painting by Tim O'Brien, the artist in residence at Alstom's award-winning event, went on display for the first time on December 8.

It was unveiled by Pete Waterman OBE after it was announced that the August 1-3 event raised more than £100,000 for good causes, including five chosen charities and more than 50 participating railway heritage organisations.

The painting proudly sits below a large aluminium train headboard – designed, manufactured and finished for the festival by Chesterfield-based Newton Castings – in J shop; a large, open-plan office space situated at the heart of Alstom's 90-acre site at Litchurch Lane, Derby.

Earlier in the day, Alstom also took part in a˜time capsule burial ceremony,˜with representatives from˜Derby College˜and˜Railway 200˜at Derby Roundhouse in attendance.

Built in 1839 on the site of the former Midland Railway Locomotive Works, the structure is now the focal point of Derby College's Roundhouse Campus. Jack Rhodes, advanced apprentice at Alstom, spoke at the event which further marked rail's 200th anniversary and Derby's role as a centre of manufacturing and innovation for the industry throughout. He said: "The Railway 200 celebrations throughout 2025 have been unforgettable, especially The Greatest Gathering. Seeing so many historic and modern trains together at my place of work reminded me how far the rail industry has come – and how exciting its future is.

"It truly was an honour to be part of the record-breaking event that welcomed thousands of visitors to my home city, all united in our shared passion for the railways."



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# HOW COALBROOKDALE RESHAPED THE WORLD

Richard Trevithick's first steam railway locomotive was built in the Valley of the River Severn, laying the foundations for what was to follow on the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Under the banner 'Ironbridge, Valley of Invention,' the Coalbrookdale museums have fascinating displays about the Industrial Revolution before and during the beginning of railways, as **John Titlow** discovers.

With the hugely successful nationwide Railway 200 celebrations based on the bicentenary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway which, on September 27, 1825, ran the world's first modern train, that occasion was in itself the watershed moment in the evolution of steam transport technology that began more than two decades before, in the Midlands, for it is in Coalbrookdale (and shortly afterwards Bridgnorth) that the invention of self-propelled railways took root.

Ironbridge Gorge is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the priceless Coalbrookdale collection of museums at Ironbridge are located where the Industrial Revolution began in the late 18th century. The museums are not specifically about railways, and while they appeal to a far wider audience, there is plenty to keep the railway enthusiast occupied – especially when the replica of the Trevithick locomotive of 1802/3 is in steam.

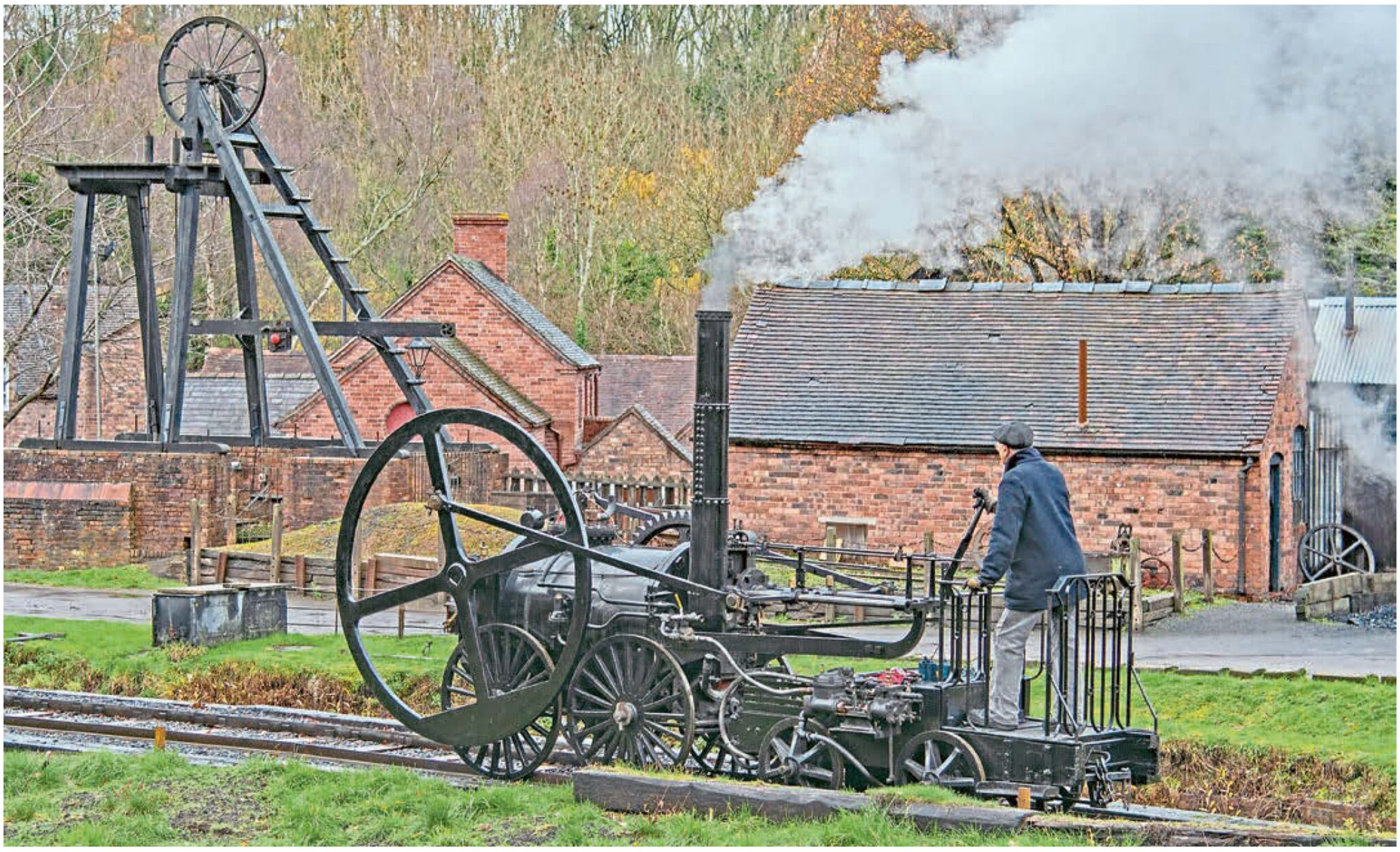
As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 340, the replica was recently returned to steam and now operates on its dedicated track in the excellent museum at Blists Hill. To watch this locomotive running with its gears whirring round is a sight to behold – it bears the slimmest of connections to what we see today in the modern steam locomotive, but it is how it all started!

Cornishman Richard Trevithick has to be the father of railways after converting one of his stationary high-pressure steam engines used to drive a hammer onto wheels in 1803.

Trevithick was born at Tregajorran, near Camborne, in 1771. Being the son of a mining captain, engineering was around him from an early age and he watched steam engines pump water from the local tin and copper mines. His neighbour was William Murdoch, pioneer of the steam carriage, whose experiments with steam-powered road locomotion would have influenced Trevithick.

School was not his greatest thing, but he had an aptitude for maths. Starting work at East Stray Park Mine aged 19, he quickly became a consultant. In 1797 he married Jane Harvey, whose father John formed a company building large stationary beam engines. That same year, Trevithick became engineer at the Ding Dong Mine and in conjunction with Edward Bull pioneered the use of high-pressure steam. Together they built engines that were installed in mines.

In 1799, according to his son Francis, Trevithick was the first to make high-pressure



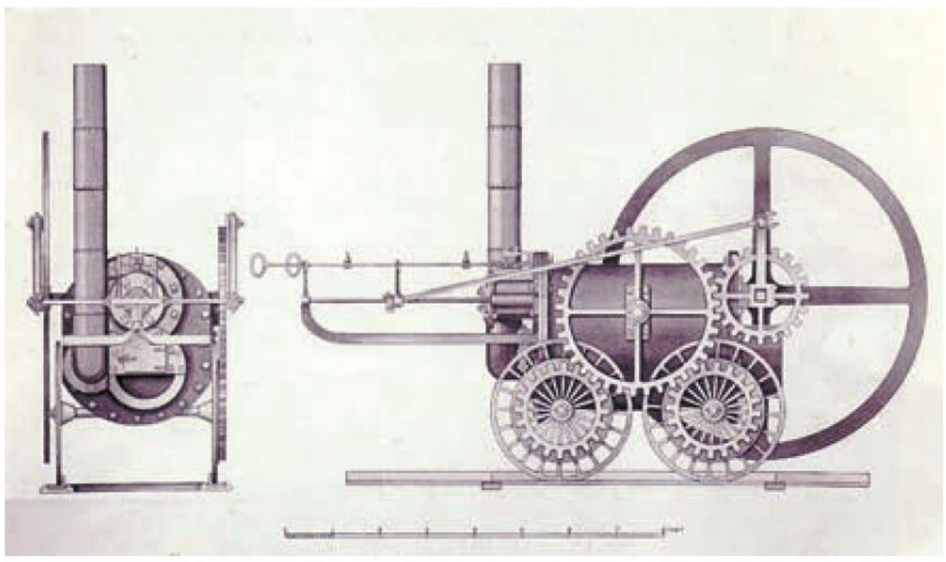
**An early industrial mining scene at Blists Hill as the 1802/3 replica Trevithick locomotive steams alongside the short stretch of the Shropshire Canal on December 4. The Shropshire Canal, or Coalport Canal, was a tub boat waterway built to supply coal, ore and limestone to the industrial region of east Shropshire that adjoined the River Severn and operated from 1792 to 1894.**



**With wheels and gears moving, the Trevithick replica locomotive runs past on December 12.**



**Looking along the recently relaid 3ft gauge track at Blists Hill with the mining village in the background.**



**Above: The only known drawing of the 1802/3 Coalbrookdale locomotive.** SCIENCE MUSEUM

**Right: Looking through the boiler of the 1802/3 replica Trevithick locomotive showing the large and small tubes.**





**The replica of Trevithick's *Catch Me Who Can*, which was built in Bridgnorth in 1808, sits inside Bury Transport Museum during its loan visit last autumn.** TREVITHICK 200

steam work using a single cylinder to drive wheels or gears. Various experiments took place before he built *Puffing Devil*, a full-size steam road locomotive in 1801.

However, it was French inventor Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot who in 1870 built a steam wagon which is considered to be the world's first full-size and working self-propelled mechanical land vehicle.

## What led from that first steam trip in Cornwall…

On Christmas Eve 1801, Trevithick demonstrated his road locomotive by successfully carrying six passengers up Fore Street and then continuing up Camborne Hill, from Camborne Cross to the nearby village of Beacon. However, during further tests, it broke down three days later after passing over a pothole in the road. While the operators went to a nearby pub for drinks and a meal and left *Puffing Devil* unattended, the boiler went dry, overheating the locomotive and destroying it in a fire.

Trevithick saw the pitfalls of running such a locomotive on the poor-quality road surfaces of his day and instead considered a redesign. In 1802, he took out a patent for his high-pressure steam engine and built a stationary one at the Coalbrookdale Company's works in Shropshire, which also built a railway locomotive for him, either that year or in the one afterwards.

Little is known about this locomotive apart from a drawing and a letter by its designer now found in the Science Museum. The letter to his friend Davies Giddy says: "The design incorporated a single horizontal cylinder enclosed in a return-flue boiler. A flywheel drove the wheels on one side through spur gears, and the axles were mounted directly on the boiler, with no frame."

It is this drawing that inspired the construction of the replica, often referred to as The Coalbrookdale Locomotive and often unofficially referred to as 'Trevithick.' No other plans or drawings exist.

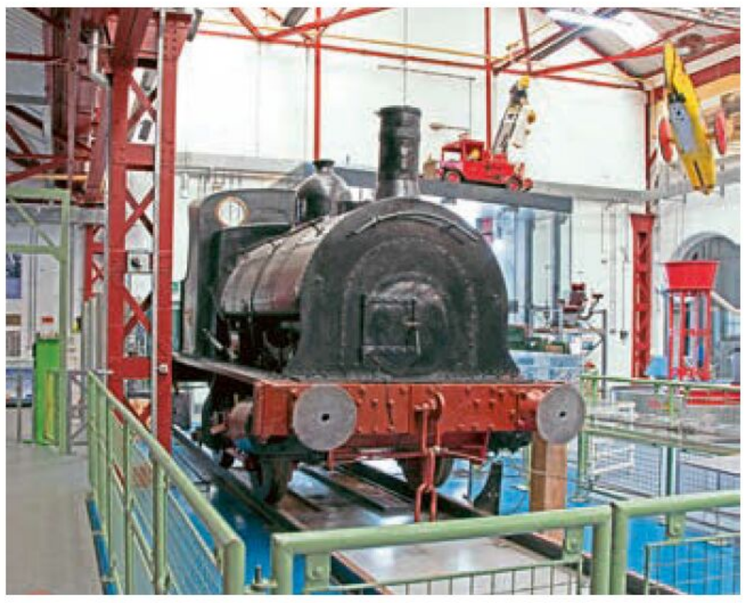
The building of the replica proves that Trevithick was right and that the locomotive does work. Everything that has followed this locomotive over two centuries has come from this one important drawing.

Coalbrookdale's connections go back to the very beginning of railways because the first iron wheels and rails were cast there in the 18th century. A year later in 1804, the world's first-ever steam hauled railway journey took place between the ironworks at Penydarren over the nine-mile connecting tramroad miles to the Merthyr-Cardiff Canal.

According to Trevithick's description: "Yesterday, we proceeded on our journey with the engine, and we carried 10 tons of iron in five wagons, and 70 men riding on them the whole of the journey… the engine, while working, went nearly five miles an hour; there was no water put into the boiler from the time we started until our journey's end… the coal consumed was two hundredweight." Does this constitute a passenger train?



**The replica of Richard Trevithick's road engine *Puffing Devil*, which pre-dated his railway locomotives, at Camborne's Trevithick Day, an annual celebration of the town's most famous hero, on April 28, 2018. The replica, built by the Trevithick Society, was first displayed in 2001 and has led the led the steam engine parade at Trevithick Days ever since.** ROBIN JONES



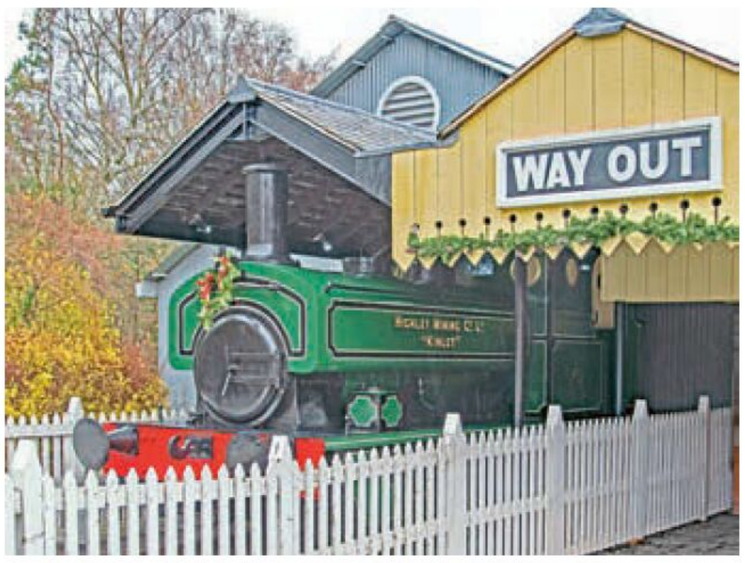
**Coalbrookdale Company 0-4-0ST of 1864-66 No. 5 *Coalbrookdale* in displayed in the Enginuety Museum. Following the death of the last member of the Darby family in 1926, the Coalbrookdale Company was absorbed into a succession of other companies and operations at the foundry ceased in 2017.**



**Two vertical-boilered Sentinel locomotives under the viaduct arches at Coalbrookdale are Nos. 6155 (left) and No. 6185 (right), both repainted in 2025.**



**What looks like an old tramcar that was converted into a gospel car and Sunday school now sits alongside the towpath on the opposite side of the canal to where the Trevithick replica runs.**




**Displayed at Blists Hill is the Highley Mining Company's Andrew Barclay 0-6-0ST No. 782 of 1896 *Kinlet*, delivered new to Kinlet Colliery, one of several mines in the Highley area of the River Severn Valley. After the colliery closed, it was sold to HS Pitt & Co at Pensnett, near Dudley, and moved there in 1938 to work at the coal depot until 1966, when it was replaced by a Ruston diesel. At Pesnett, the locomotive carried the name *Peter*.**

A replica of the Penydarren locomotive, which was built in about 1981, stands in the National Waterfront Museum at Swansea, while Trevithick's No. 14 high-pressure engine, built by Hazledine and Company in Bridgnorth in about 1806, is on view at the Science Museum in London.

Another early locomotive designed by Trevithick was *Catch Me Who Can,* which was built by John Hazledine and John Urpeth Rastrick at Bridgnorth, Shropshire, in 1808. It ran on a 100ft circular track specially constructed at Euston Square in London, offering public rides in carriages for one shilling, and so became the world's first locomotive to haul fare-paying passengers.

Plaques on the River Severn bridge in Bridgnorth denote its building nearby, and that of the No. 14 engine.

A group of Bridgnorth residents formed a charity in 2007 to build a working replica of *Catch Me Who Can* to celebrate the 2008 bicentenary of this historic event, which was previously neglected locally yet is an important part of the town's history and very much under-recognised.

The replica stood on display outside at Bridgnorth station on the Severn Valley Railway for a long time and last autumn visited the Bury Transport Museum, on the East Lancashire Railway, on loan.

The *Catch Me Who Can* replica has been steamed on several occasions but is currently unable to move under its own power as it needs work for it to run and (importantly) brakes fitted, which the original never had.

## The working replica

The full-scale working replica of the 1802/3 locomotive is now running at Blists Hill Victorian Museum, Coalbrookdale.

The original locomotive was a prototype and its fate – if indeed it was ever built – is unknown. To put it into perspective, this design came 23 years before Stephenson's *Rocket*.

Keeping the local connections, the replica was built by employees of GKN Sankey in Telford in 1989/90 using historic and contemporary evidence

It ran at Blists Hill until July 2024 when it needed essential repairs including replacement tubes. There is one large tube and 26 small ones. All work was done in the Blists Hill workshops using mainly volunteer manpower. The boiler tubes are welded into place rather than expanded.

The replica will move on a boiler pressure of 50psi but can go higher. It is extremely stubborn to steam, with little draw on the fire; a fan is attached to increase the draw to get it steaming. There is no reverser and the crank has to be in the correct position for the steam to enter the single cylinder from the opposite end. A drum brake has been fitted on the tender; the original would have never have had one of these.

The track is a simple 3ft gauge plateway running about 100 yards and made from angle iron. It has been recently lifted and relaid by several corporate volunteers, including Network Rail. Its wheels are flangeless and the upright section of the angle iron keep it in the tracks.

## Museums of the gorge

There are several museums in Coalbrookdale, the main one being Blists Hill Victorian Town Museum. While the replica works here, there is much more to see, including a rail crane, several sections of narrow gauge track and an inclined plane.

The Hay Inclined Plane was completed in 1793 to transport tub boats from the Shropshire Canal to the then navigable River Severn. Original rails exist on the short section at the top.

It was taken over by the LNWR in 1857 and its last recorded use was apparently in 1894. The LNWR built the Coalport branch line underneath the incline from Wellington to Coalport, which opened in 1861.



**Looking across the canal, the Trevithick replica runs on its dedicated 3ft gauge track at Blists Hill Museum.**

WR 4-6-0 No. 7029 *Clun Castle* backs down over Coalbrookdale Viaduct during a special trip over the Ironbridge branch tied in with a special working from Birmingham to Cosford Air Show on June 9, 2019. Below are the remains of Abraham Darby's blast furnace. Apart from two test trains, no traffic has used the branch since the closure of Buildwas power stations, and the last working was on December 12, 2015, when a GBRf Class 66 removed three crippled wagons.






Above: The Hay Inclined plane can also be found at the museum at Blists Hill.

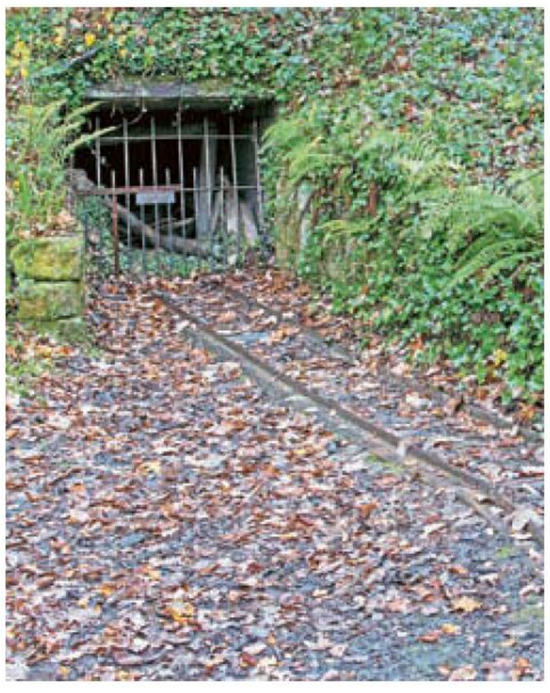
Left: Open wagons at the LNWR goods shed at Blists Hill.



Above: A flangeless cauldron wagon at the back of the Blists Hill brickworks.

Right: You could be forgiven for thinking you were on the underground: Originating from Covent Garden station is a reconstructed set of tiles at the Tile Museum in Jackfield, Coalbrookdale.



Above: Narrow gauge angle iron track runs into a drift mine.

Rails have since been laid as part of the creation of the Ironbridge Gorge Museums.

The local pub in the museum serves a good pint of Hobsons and the chippy cooks its fish and chips in beef dripping

Nearby is the Jackfield Tile Museum, where they have reconstructed a tunnel of tiles from Covent Garden station.

Further down the gorge is the Museum of Iron, housed in the Coalbrookdale Company's Grade II-listed warehouse built in 1838 and used to store cast-iron products until 1979.

It is here that Abraham Darby first began smelting iron using coke rather than charcoal; his original blast furnace is part of the museum.

Opposite is Enginuity, a hands-on museum which houses standard gauge 0-4-0ST No. 5, built by the Coalbrookdale Company between 1864 and 1866.

Six locomotives were originally built for shunting. No. 5 survives by chance because it was sold for scrap in the 1930s and instead hired to Netherseal Colliery in Derbyshire in 1934. Later, it was sold to Bardon Hill Quarries, Leicestershire, as standby locomotive until 1944. When it was taken out of service, it stood in the open at Bardon Hill until 1959.

Before the opening of the Coalbrookdale Works Museum in 1959, the works manager was informed of its survival, and after negotiations with the quarry owners it was returned to its birthplace, two days before the official opening of the museum on October 15, 1959.

Underneath the adjacent viaduct are two vertical-boilered locomotives, both recently the recipients of a complete repaint.

Historically important, these are two of the earliest Sentinels in existence, carrying Nos. 6155 and 6185. Conversion to Sentinels was done for economic reasons to reduce water and coal consumption by a significant amount.

Sentinel No. 6155 is the more intact of the two. It was originally a Manning Wardale 0-4-0ST built in about 1860. Conversion took place in 1925 by Thomas Wragg & Co of Swadlincote, costing approximately £350. No. 6185 was built in about 1865 as an 0-4-0T by the Coalbrookdale Company as No. 6, identical to No. 5. Working into the 1940s, No. 6185 was partially stripped down during the war years for much-needed scrap. Fortunately, the wheels, chassis and main components survived, and it was incorporated into the Coalbrookdale Museum in 1959.

The viaduct behind the museums served the coal-burning Buildwas power stations across the river, which was demolished in 2018/19. Presently, plans are afoot for the construction of about 1000 homes on the site.

The railway that served the power station is now disused.

However, the Telford Steam Railway's goal is to take over the track between the power station and Lightmoor Junction as part of its southern extension from Horsehay. There is also talk of the introduction of passenger trains serving the new development.

The building which houses the Museum of the Gorge alongside the River Severn, near the Iron Bridge, was constructed in about 1840, and several narrow gauge tramways ran there. Grooves leading into the building for flangeless wheels can be seen, with a small wagon on display inside.

Crossing over the Iron Bridge – which opened in 1781 as the first major bridge in the world to be made of cast-iron and celebrated as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution – you can see where the Severn Valley Railway once ran.

A cycle path now connects with Bridgnorth along the old trackbed.

Further downstream along the River Severn is Bedlam Furnace, towards Madeley. This was a coke blast furnace and considered one of the earliest in the UK.

If you are interested in industrial archaeology, there is plenty to keep you occupied, not just in Blists Hill and Coalbrookdale, but in Ironbridge itself.

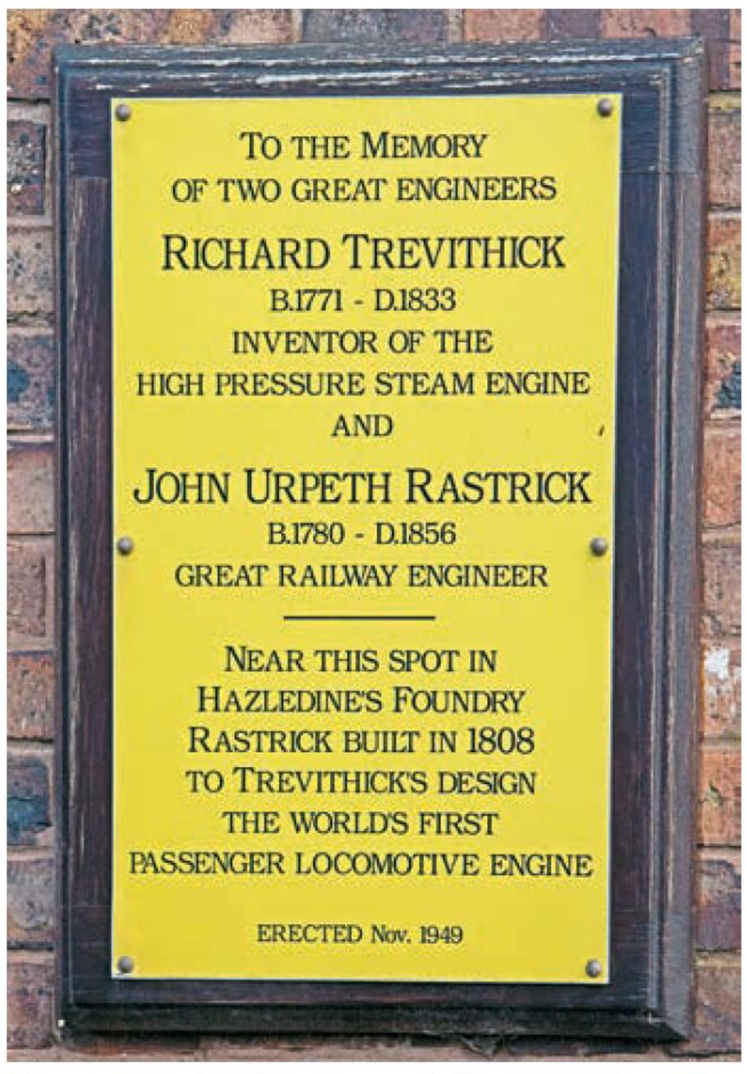
In March, the museum will become part of the National Trust, so we will see if this affects the museum and its railway collection. HR

**➜ For further information about the museums, visit https://www.ironbridge.org.uk/visit/coalbrookdale-museum-of-iron/**



A street scene at Blists Hill.


The Museum of the Gorge alongside the River Severn has a display of track and a wagon.



Plaque over the River Severn bridge in Bridgnorth celebrating the town's part in the origins of steam railways.


Looking down towards the upper Shropshire Canal at the top of the inclined plane with the original rails still in place.

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Image: Nigel Valentine

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**The newest addition to the main line-certified pool of locomotives, Southern Locomotives Limited's West Country light Pacific No. 34028 *Eddystone*, crosses the River Arun at Ford with Railway Touring Company's 'Bath & Bristol Christmas Express' on December 13, 2025.**
NICK GILLIAM




**Enthusiasts line the platform of Cheltenham Spa as D1015 *Western Champion*, temporarily renamed as D1001 *Western Pathfinder*, passes through with the Pathfinder farewell tour on December 20.** JACK BOSKETT/PATHFINDER

# And that's that: Pathfi nder bows out after 52 years of touring

**By Owen Hayward**

DECEMBER 20 was an emotional day for many as Pathfinder Railtours ran its final outing, bringing the curtain down on more than half a century of service.

Setting out from Salisbury behind a pair of West Coast Railways Class 57s, upon arrival at Gloucester, Class 52 D1015 *Western Champion* took over for the remainder of the journey to Manchester Victoria.

To mark the occasion, the Western temporarily became D1001 *Western Pathfinder* in tribute to the firm and carried a headboard, the design of which was inspired by that carried on classmate D1023 *Western Fusilier* on February 12, 1977, during the 'Western Finale' railtour as the class was withdrawn from BR service.

Based in Stroud, Pathfinder's origins stretch back to 1973. Established by enthusiasts Tony Fielding and Peter Watts, the company was then known as F&W Railtours. On June 10 that year, it ran its first tour – 'The Snowdonian' – from Gloucester Eastgate to Pwllheli, worked by Class 47 No. 4644 and Class 27s Nos. 5079 and 5087.

The company grew to run tours in near enough every part of mainland Britain, from steam trips over unusual routes to taking diesel-hydraulics to north and west Scotland.

However, with the rail network and industry having changed drastically, resulting in increased pressures and challenges, in September it was announced that Pathfinder would cease trading at the end of the year, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 338. When tickets for its final outing were released on October 2, they sold out in just 54 minutes, and seats on an additional carriage added on November 13 were snapped up just as quickly.

A mini tour to Lostock Hall junction and back was also offered in addition to the main journey to Manchester, enabling the train to be turned in readiness for the homeward journey.

To mark the occasion, a limited amount of merchandise was produced and offered for sale on the farewell trip. Furthermore, the headboard (which was one of two produced) was put up for sale through a sealed bid auction in aid of charity.

A statement issued by the firm following the tour said: "As the year draws to a close, we wanted to take a moment to say a very heartfelt thank-you to everyone who travelled with us on 'The Pathfinder Finale.' It was a truly special and emotional day, and we are immensely grateful that so many of you chose to be part of it. Your support, warmth and enthusiasm made it a fitting and memorable farewell.

"Just as importantly, thank-you to everyone who has travelled with Pathfinder Railtours over the years. Whether you joined us once or many times, you helped shape a company that has proudly delivered 52 years of railtour history, memories, friendships, and unforgettable journeys across the network.

## A sad farewell

"As Pathfinder Railtours now comes to an end, our website will transition to a holding page, which will also include links to other railtour operators so that your passion for rail travel can continue into the future.

"This holding page will remain live for a limited period before being withdrawn, our social media channels will no longer be active, and the booking office at Giddynap Lane, Stroud, will be unmanned.

"From all of us, it has been an absolute privilege to share this journey with you."

Press officer Jack Boskett added: "Although I first came across Pathfinder back in 2010 and have been involved in various ways ever since, it was in 2020 that Peter Watts formally asked me to come on board to take on marketing and PR on a freelance basis. I've had the privilege of working with some truly fantastic people who I'm proud to now call close friends. Being part of the final chapter, and especially the last train, was emotional, memorable, and a real honour."




**D1015 at Manchester Victoria shortly after arrival with the mini tour from Lostock Hall junction.** TOM MCATEE



**Pathfinder Railtours staff and train stewards, including founder Peter Watts (second from right), aboard the firm's farewell trip to Manchester.** JACK BOSKETT/PATHFINDER



**Pre-order Issue 342:** Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

# Travelling experience concept for Vintage Trains' 'Shakespeare Express'

**By Robin Jones**

VINTAGE Trains' spring and summer 'Shakespeare Express' season will return with an expanded timetable featuring authentic 1950s Pullman dining and 1960s First Class services under a The Year of the Journey theme for 2026, celebrating travel as an experience in itself.

The concept showcases the idea that the experience of travel is as important as the destination. Services run at express speeds, allowing passengers to experience the rhythm and pace of steam era travel on the modern network.

The timetable features morning departures from Birmingham Snow Hill, Birmingham Moor Street and Tyseley, offering about four-and-a-half hours in Stratford-upon-Avon.

A dedicated afternoon First Class service operates on select Sundays, departing Birmingham Snow Hill at 2.07pm and arriving in Stratford at 3.10pm, with afternoon tea served throughout.

The 'Shakespeare Pullman' runs in the opposite direction from Stratford, departing at 12.49pm with pick-ups available at Henley-in-Arden, featuring a three-course Sunday lunch service in original Pullman cars or a First Class afternoon tea option, new for 2026. As reported last issue, the Birmingham 'Shakespeare Express' starts on June 14 and then runs every Sunday from July 26 until August 30.

However, the first 'Shakespeare Express' of the season will run from Derby on April 26, with a Worcester start on May 17.

VT managing director Nick Ralls said: "The Year of the Journey is about reclaiming what travel used to mean. These services show that travelling somewhere can be as valuable as arriving there.

"Our volunteer teams bring decades of accumulated knowledge to keep these trains running to main line standards. Every component, every fitting, every detail receives the attention it would have had in the steam era. That dedication is what makes these journeys authentic."

Tickets for the coming season are available now, with prices starting from £26.50 for standard class travel, Pullman dining experiences from £132.50 and First Class services from £90.10 including period-appropriate catering served at passengers' seats.

Further information on specific operating dates and rolling stock formations is available at vintagetrains.co.uk To book, visit bookings@vintagetrains.co.uk or telephone 0121 708 4960.



**GWR 4-6-0 No. 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* passes Solihull Meadow with a Dorridge to Birmingham Moor Street 'Polar Express' on December 13.** ROBERT FALCONER

# Double Valentine's Day steam for RTC

**By Tim Hobman**

THE Railway Touring Company has announced two special steam excursions for Valentine's Day, Saturday, February 14.

'The Valentines White Rose' will run from London to York and the 'The Valentine's Stratford Flyer' from Manchester to Stratford-upon-Avon.

Starting out from King's Cross behind a steam locomotive, the 'White Rose' tour is scheduled to head north on the East Coast Main Line to pick up additional passengers at Stevenage, Huntingdon and Peterborough.

It is expected to arrive at York just after lunchtime, and passengers will then have about three hours to explore the city before returning to London.

The route home is planned to be through Gainsborough, with the locomotive stopping for water at Saxilby. The tour is then booked to then pass through Lincoln and Spalding before rejoining the East Coast Main Line to set down passengers at Peterborough. The route back to London King's Cross is scheduled to be a straight run south, setting down passengers at Huntingdon and Stevenage.

The Stratford tour will start from Manchester Victoria, again steam-hauled by a locomotive from the West Coast Railways' Carnforth pool of engines. The route is scheduled to be via Stockport and Macclesfield, picking up passengers at both stations, and then via Stoke and Stafford on the Trent Valley Line. Heading via Wolverhampton towards Birmingham New Street, it will then take the route to Stratford-upon-Avon.

Passengers will have just over three hours to explore the town before the return journey via the same route, setting down passengers at their joining stations.

Tickets are available for both tours in premier dining, First Class and standard class, with a discount for junior travellers and families.

For more details, visit www.railwaytouring.net

## Three in one for Saphos

**TO kick off the 2026 season, Saphos Trains is offering customers three separate opportunities on Thursday, February 12 which may be combined for the ultimate experience.**

**The day begins at 3.30am with a positioning move from Crewe to Euston. A limited number of passengers are invited to travel in the empty coaching stock move behind an electric locomotive for a fast run south on the West Coast Main Line, arriving at 6.30am.**

**The ECS move is planned in preparation for the next tour of the day, 'The Fearless Express,' running from Euston to Crewe behind Class 50 No. 50050 *Fearless*. Leaving Euston at 7am, the tour will pick up additional passengers at Milton Keynes and then run fast to arrive in Crewe at 9.55am – the arrival coinciding with the next tour of the day, 'The Cumbrian Mountaineer.'**

### Pacific power

**Planned to be hauled by A2 Pacific No. 60532 *Blue Peter,* 'The Cumbrian Mountaineer' will depart from Crewe at 10.35am. Heading north on the West Coast Main Line, *Blue Peter* is expected to get an opportunity for some fast running as it climbs over Shap and down into Carlisle for a mid-afternoon arrival. Passengers will then have about three hours to explore Carlisle before the return journey over the same route.**

**Arriving back in Crewe at 8.30pm, the tour will then allow passengers the chance to board the return leg of 'The Fearless Express,' departing at 9pm.**

**For those keen to experience all three tours, the final ECS positioning move is expected to leave Euston at 11.55pm and arrive back at Crewe at 3am.**

**Customers have the choice of booking one, two, or all three tours, with those choosing just the positioning move having just under 18 hours to explore London, while 'The Fearless Express' gives customers 11 hours in Crewe.**

**Tickets are available in First Class (non-dining) and standard class for all three tours: as this issue went to press, standard class had sold out for 'The Cumbrian Mountaineer.'**

**For more information and to make a booking, visit saphostrains.com**

# ‘Great Britain XVIII’ to head from Paddington to Penzance and Mallaig

**By Robin Jones**

THE itinerary for the Railway Touring Company’s ‘‘Great Britain XVIII,’ which will run on April 18-25, has been released.

The tour starts at Paddington early on the Saturday morning, heading to Slough and Reading, from where it will take the Berks & Hants line through Newbury, Westbury and Castle Cary, joining the Bristol to Plymouth route at Cogload Junction, near Taunton, for a challenging climb to Whiteball Summit. It will run via Exeter and the Dawlish sea wall to Teignmouth and Newton Abbot, tackling the South Devon banks while heading to Plymouth. Crossing the Royal Albert Bridge at Saltash, it heads for Penzance for the first overnight stop.

On Sunday, April 19, the ‘Great Britain’ heads to Taunton and Bristol, taking the Severn Tunnel to Newport and then the Welsh Marches route north, passing through Abergavenny, Hereford, Leominster and Ludlow to Shrewsbury.

From there, the tour takes the borders line through Gobowen to Chester, passing over Cefn Viaduct spanning the River Dee, ending the day with a spirited run to Chester, where a city centre hotel awaits.

April 20 sees the tour head via Northwich, Altrincham and south Manchester towards Chinley and the Hope Valley line, complete with numerous dark tunnels and testing gradients. At Sheffield, the ‘Great Britain’ diverts from the main line to York and Doncaster to head for Barnsley, where a rare steam-hauled track will take it via Horbury Junction to Wakefield Kirkgate.

A circuitous route avoids Leeds, joining the Aire Valley and travelling through Bronte country at Keighley to Hellifield and Settle Junction to take the Settle to Carlisle line for the overnight destination on Carlisle.

## Crossing the border

On April 21, the ‘Great Britain’ runs north across the Scottish border at Gretna Junction and has applied to take the Glasgow & South Western Railway’s route via Dumfries and Galloway to Kilmarnock and the infrequently steam-hauled route via Dunlop to Glasgow Central. If the journey over this route is impossible due to pathing and timing constraints, the ‘Great Britain’ will instead take the steeply graded Caledonian route, with its frequent loop availability, via Beattock Summit to reach Carstairs and the Glasgow area.

Following a break in Glasgow, the tour will head along the north bank of the Clyde through Dumbarton to Craigendoran Junction, before taking the West Highland Line to Fort William for a two-night stay.

Wednesday, April 22 will feature an optional excursion with a return steam-hauled trip on ‘The Jacobite’ route along the West Highland Extension to Mallaig.

April 23 will start with a southbound return run on the West Highland Line, along the shores of Loch Lomond. Following the north bank of the Clyde, the trip runs through the north Glasgow suburbs to Croy before turning north to Stirling, Perth and Dundee.

It will then head through Carnoustie and Arbroath towards Montrose, before turning inland for Stonehaven, with Aberdeen being the destination for the evening.

On April 24, the ‘Great Britain’ heads via Dundee and the Tay Bridge through Fife to the Forth Bridge and Edinburgh. Turning southwards, it takes the East Coast Main Line towards Berwick-on-Tweed and the Royal Border Bridge for an overnight stop in Newcastle.

The final day will see the ‘Great Britain’ head through Durham to York, before taking the ECML to Doncaster and then changing lines for Sheffield, avoided by taking the Barrow Hill line past Barrow Hill roundhouse, through to Chesterfield and via the Erewash Valley to Trent Junction. From there, it will head onwards to Loughborough, diverting via Melton Mowbray and Corby to join the Midland Main line at Kettering. It will leave the main St Pancras line at Bedford, taking the Marston Vale line through to Bletchley to join the West Coast Main Line for an exhilarating fast run up the West Coast Main Line to Euston.

## Pricing options

Prices are premier class, £4895, with the Fort William optional day at £325, and a single supplement of £695; and First Class, £3995, with Fort William optional day £275 and single supplement £495. Prices are per person based on two sharing.

Premier dining class includes morning coffee served with a Danish pastry and a three-course dinner. First Class includes morning coffee served with a Danish pastry and a light two-course dinner. Tables for two in both classes are available for a supplement of £275 per person, subject to availability. To book, visit www.railwaytouring.co.uk




**On December 20, LNER B1 No. 61306 *Mayflower* crosses the River Thames at Imperial Wharf in London with one of Steam Dreams’ ‘Santa Steam Express’ workings, which ran from Victoria to Willesden Junction before returning via Putney.** OWEN HAYWARD



**Pre-order Issue 342:** Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.



***Duke of Gloucester* passes through High Wycombe on December 17 with the Steam Dreams excursion to Oxford, which originated diesel-hauled at Southend Central in Essex before the Duke joined the train at Southall in West London.** KENNY FELSTEAD

# The Duke heads to Bath

ON Saturday, May 16, Steam Dreams will run a tour from Kent to Bath featuring unique BR Standard Class 8 Pacific No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*.

Starting from Ashford International diesel-hauled, the route towards the capital will be the South Eastern Main Line, picking up at Tonbridge and Sevenoaks, before turning onto the Chatham Main Line for the next passenger pick-up at Bromley South.

Negotiating South London and heading north-west to cross the River Thames, the tour is bound for West London for a change of locomotive from diesel to steam. From here, the tour will head over the Great Western Main Line for the final passenger pick-up at Maidenhead and then head to Bath, arriving in the early afternoon.

Passengers will have three-and-a-half hours to explore the spa city before the return journey via the same route, setting down passengers at their joining stations.

Tickets are available in Pullman dining and First Class non-dining.

For more details and to book, visit steamdreams.co.uk

# 'Remembering Rosemary' railtour

ON Saturday, January 17, Hastings Diesels will run a 174-mile trip aboard DEMU No. 1001 from Hastings to the royal station of Windsor & Eton Riverside under the title 'Remembering Rosemary.'

The tour honours the memory of Rosemary Gainsbury, who died in late October. She had a longstanding involvement with HDL which progressed into running catering on its railtours and served as a director for 25 years.

Starting from Hastings, the tour will pick up additional passengers at St Leonards Warrior Square, West St Leonards, Crowhurst, Battle, Etchingham, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Bromley South.

From Bromley, the tour will head via the Penge Tunnel through the Brixton area to Linford Street Junction and onto the curve to access the South West Main Line and London Waterloo. Following a final passenger pick-up and reversal at Waterloo, the trip will head to Windsor via Twickenham and Staines.

Passengers will have about two hours to explore Windsor before the return journey. Tickets are available in First Class and standard class. For more details and to book, visit www.hastingsdiesels.co.uk

# Spring HST tour to Kyle of Lochalsh

MIDLAND Pullman is to run a three-day 'Lord of the Isles Pullman' tour to the Scottish Highlands on board its luxury High Speed Train set.

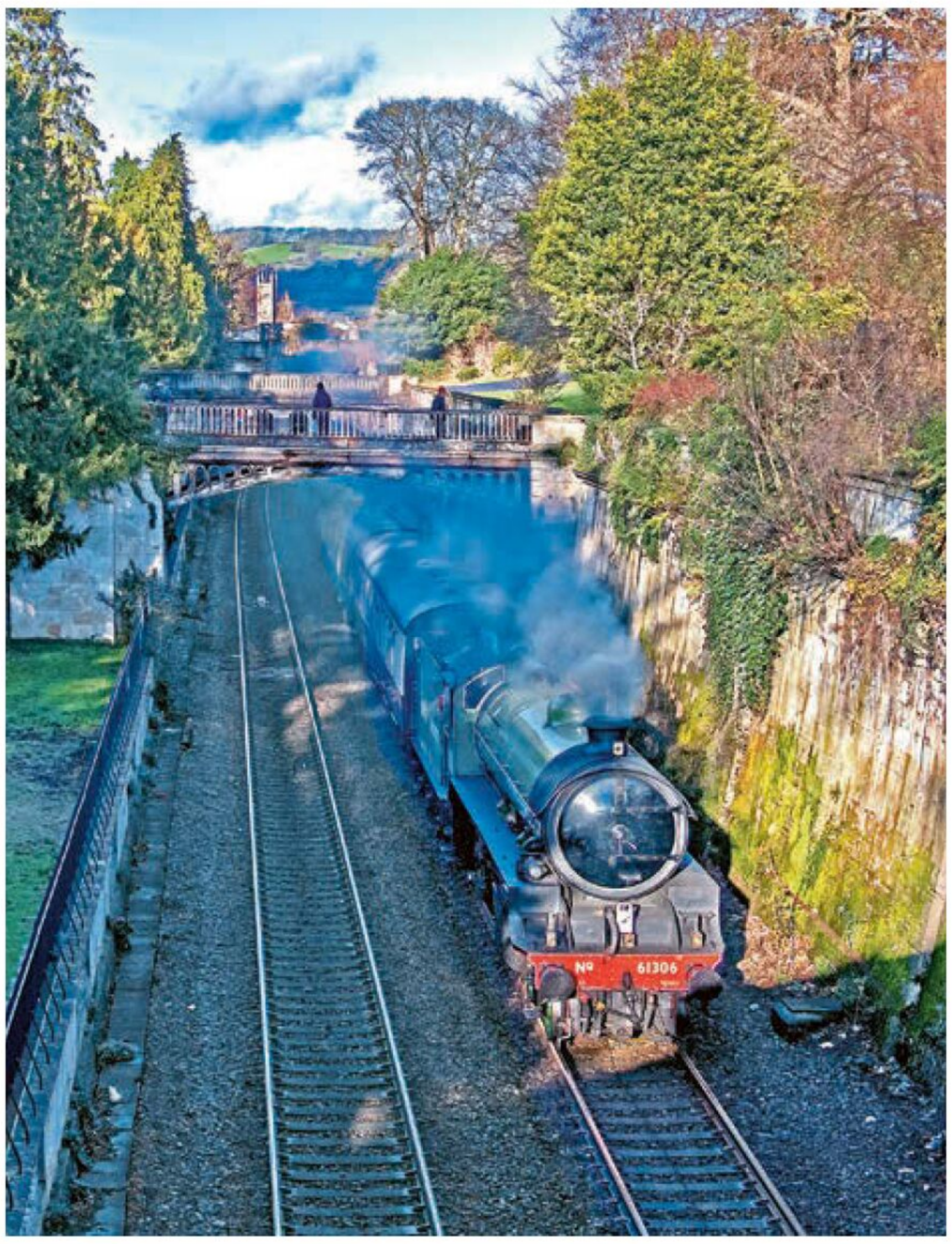
Starting from St Albans City on Saturday, April 25, the tour will pick up additional passengers at Luton, Bedford, Wellingborough, Kettering, Leicester, Loughborough, East Midlands Parkway, Derby, Belper and Chesterfield.

It is planned to run through the Scottish Lowlands towards Edinburgh and cross the Forth Bridge to pick up the Highland Main Line at Perth, heading via Pitlochry, Kingussie and Aviemore to Inverness for an overnight stay.

The next day, it will leave Inverness after breakfast and head towards Dingwall to pick up the Kyle of Lochalsh Line. There will be time to explore Kyle of Lochalsh before the return journey to Inverness for another overnight stay.

The final day of the tour involves the journey home with further exploration. Leaving Inverness, it will follow the Highland Main Line to Perth, but then take the Glasgow-Dundee Line towards Stirling, before retracing the outward journey, setting down passengers en route back to St Albans.

For details and to book tickets, visit midlandpullman.com



**Running about an hour late, No. 61306 *Mayflower* runs through Sydney Gardens approaching Bath Spa with Saphos Trains' 'The Bath Christmas Market Express' on December 12.** JOHN TITLOW

# Triple diesels tour to Bury

**By Tim Hobman**

UK Railtours will use three heritage diesels to haul its tour to the East Lancashire Railway on Saturday, March 7.

Starting from Watford Junction, the tour will head north up the West Coast Main Line behind two Class 50s to pick up additional passengers at Bletchley.

The train is scheduled to take the Marston Vale Line to Bedford for more passengers. Heading north on the Midland Main Line, the tour is then planned to pause at Kettering, Leicester and East Midlands Parkway to collect further passengers.

It will then head into DB Cargo's Toton depot for an assisting locomotive to be coupled to the train for later use.

Leaving Toton, the route is expected to be via Castle Donington, Uttoxeter and Stoke on Trent, from where the train rejoins the line as far as Heaton Norris Junction.

From there, the tour will run via Reddish South, Baguley Fold Junction and the tight curvature as the train crosses Brewery Fork viaduct in the suburbs east of Manchester, taking the train onto the Rochdale line as far as Castleton. Here, there is a planned reversal, where the assisting locomotive will lead the train onto the connection with the ELR.

Passengers will then have the choice of a trip to the end of the line, with the train expected to be piloted by the ELR's Class 56, No. 56006, or alight at Bury Bolton Street to explore the station and town. Customers will have about three hours at the railway.

The return journey will see the Class 50s lead over the gradients of the Pennines as the train heads towards Hebden Bridge and Bradford Interchange for a reversal. The assisting locomotive will then retrace the route as far as Halifax, where the train is planned to turn east towards Wakefield.

After reversals at both Kirkgate and Westgate stations, the tour is scheduled to head back towards Chesterfield, Derby and ultimately Toton where the assisting locomotive will be detached.

With both Class 50s once again leading, the tour heads back towards London, setting down passengers at their joining stations as far south as Bedford, then Bletchley and Watford Junction.

Tickets are available in First Class dining and non-dining and standard class, with a buffet car provided for refreshments.

For more details and to book, visit www.ukrailtours.com

# A1 goes solo for springtime Shap ascent with Vintage Trains

**By Owen Hayward**

RENOWNED for its GWR Castle class-worked excursions, railtour operator Vintage Trains will once again be giving enthusiasts an opportunity to enjoy the sound of steam working hard up the West Coast Main Line – this time with Peppercorn A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* set to tackle Shap without diesel assistance.

Since its main line operating contract with West Coast Railways was terminated in July, as reported in *Heritage railway* issue 336, new-build *Tornado* has predominantly been seen on heritage lines and at Hopetown Darlington, where The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust is based.

Following a large gap after the announcement of this parting of ways with WCR, the A1's most recent outing was on December 10 with Tyseley-based Vintage Trains and the 'Christmas White Rose' to York, and a further tour has been booked with the locomotive.




**No. 60163 *Tornado* passes Burbage Common near Hinckley with the outward part of Vintage Trains' 'Christmas White Rose' from Dorridge to York on December 10.** GRAHAM NUTTALL

## Unassisted run

On March 28, *Tornado* will set out from Birmingham New Street and, following pick-ups at Wolverhampton, Stafford, Crewe and Warrington Bank Quay, continue northwards destined for Carlisle, where an almost two-hour break will allow passengers a chance to explore some of the city. Before that, No. 60163 will make a thunderous ascent of the 5½-mile climb between Tebay and Shap, which includes grades of up to 1-in-75.

While a diesel will be attached to the rear between Birmingham and Carnforth, the run from there to Carlisle and back will see this assistant detached, allowing *Tornado* to stretch its legs and tackle the run without help. On the return journey, which will take in the Settle to Carlisle line, the diesel will be reattached to the rear at Hellifield for the remainder of the journey back to Birmingham.

In addition to First Class and Pullman dining options, enthusiast seats are being offered which will see travellers accommodated in one of the carriages at either end of the consist, meaning passengers will be the closest to the hard-working locomotive in at least one direction of travel. Standard class seating in other carriages is also available, with bacon rolls and afternoon tea provided as an added extra.

Prices start at £100.70 and £132.50 for child and adult seating in standard class, rising to £1144.80 for a private First Class compartment for four people (prices including a 6% booking fee).

For further details and to book, visit vintagetrains.co.uk/activities/the-shap-mountaineer/

# New plaque celebrates Brunel's historical links

A PLAQUE to mark Dorchester's historic connection to engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the GWR has been agreed for the town's West rail station.

The station, which opened in January 1857, was built by Brunel and played a vital role in Dorchester's commercial and economic development.

The original complex included cattle pens, coal yards, sheds and a signalbox, but much of it was lost when the station became unmanned in 1972 and the land sold off. The only surviving structure of note is the Grade II-listed building now occupied by Domino's Pizza.

The new circular 400mm diameter plaque, designed by today's GWR, will feature the company's green, black, and white colours and will be mounted on the rear of the Domino's building.

# Sold-out farewell Class 455 tours raise more than £45k for charity

TWO farewell tours for South Western Railway's Class 455 EMUs organised with the Branch Line Society on December 21 raised more than £45,000 for charity.

More than 900 people attended the farewell tour and the money raised from the £45.50 tickets will go towards the charities Macmillan, The Alex Wardle Foundation and Railway Children.

A total of 70 Class 455 units were built by British Rail Engineering Ltd and introduced on suburban routes in March 1983.

The fleet has been replaced by new Arterio units, the first of which carried passengers between London Waterloo and Windsor in January 2024.

The farewell event saw two Class 455s run through places including Guildford and Epsom. As reported last issue, the first sold out within 15 seconds, and a second was arranged as a result of "unprecedented demand."



**Class 455 EMU No. 5717 on one of the December 21 farewell tours. Two of the headboards were later auctioned for charity.** BLS

Long-serving SWR staff who have worked on the Class 455s for more than 40 years also joined the special service.

Rail Minsiter Lord Peter Hendy and Lawrence Bowman, managing director of SWP and Network Rail Wessex, also attended the farewell event.

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## January

**17 'Remembering Rosemary'**
Hastings, Windsor & Eton Riverside, and return.
**DEMU: 1001. HD**

**24 'The Peak Blinder'**
Norwich, Chesterfield, and return.
**Loco: 45118 *The Royal Artilleryman*. UKRT**

**31 'Cumbrian Mountain Express'**
Manchester Piccadilly, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. RTC**

**31 'The Sale of the Century'**
Derby, Shildon, and return.
**Loco: HST Nos. 43094 + 43122. UKRT**

## February

**7 'Cumbrian Mountain Express'**
Euston, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
**Loco: Steam: TBA. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC**

**12 Bath excursion**
London Victoria, Bath, and return. Diesel-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. BEL**

**12 'The Positioning Move'**
Crewe to Euston only. Electric-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. ST**

**12 'The Fearless Express'**
Euston, Milton Keynes, and return.
**Loco: 50050 *Fearless*. ST**

**12 'The Cumbrian Mountaineer'**
Crewe, Carlisle, and return.
**Loco: 60532 *Blue Peter*. ST**

**13 'The Golden Age of Trave'**
Circular tour from London Victoria. Diesel-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. BEL**

**14 'The White Rose'**
King's Cross, York, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. RTC**

**14 'The Stratford Flyer'**
Manchester Victoria, Stratford-upon-Avon, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. RTC**

**14 'The Valentines Shakespeare Express'**
Birmingham Snow Hill, Stratford-upon-Avon, and return.
**Loco: 60103 *Flying Scotsman*. VT**

**18 'The Moor Street Scot'**
Out-and-back trip between Birmingham Moor Street and Dorridge.
**Loco: 60103 *Flying Scotsman*. VT**

**19 'The Moor Street Scot'**
Out-and-back trip between Birmingham Moor Street and Dorridge.
**Loco: 60103 *Flying Scotsman*. VT**

**20 'The Moor Street Scot'**
Out-and-back trip between Birmingham Moor Street and Dorridge.
**Loco: 60103 *Flying Scotsman*. VT**

**21 'Cumbrian Mountain Express'**
Euston, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
**Loco: Steam: TBA. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC**



**Unique BR standard Class 8 No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* passes Freshford with the Saphos Trains' December 6 excursion from Ely to Bath Spa for the Christmas markets.** DAVID TAVENER

**22 Mk. 3 carriage farewell tour**
Rare tracks tour from Banbury.
**Loco: Class 68 TBA. BLS**

**26 Oxford excursion**
London Victoria, Oxford, and return. Diesel-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. BEL**

**27 Bath excursion.**
London Victoria, Bath, and return. Diesel-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. BEL**

**28 'Cumbrian Mountain Express'**
Euston, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
**Loco: Steam: TBA. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC**

## March

**7 East Lancashire Railway excursion**
Watford Junction, Bury Bolton Street, and return.
**Locos: 2x Class 50s, 1x Class 56. UKRT**

**8 'The Derby Express'**
Watford Junction to Derby only.
**Loco: 2x Class 50s. UKRT**

**11 'The Positioning Move'**
Crewe to Euston only. Electric-hauled.
**Loco: TBA. ST**

**11 'The Deltic Express'**
Euston, Milton Keynes Central, and return.
**Loco: D9000 *Royal Scots Grey*. ST**

**11 'The Cumbrian Mountaineer'**
Crewe, Carlisle, and return.
**Loco: 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*. ST**

**13 'The Golden Age of Trave'**
Circular tour from London Victoria.
**Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. BEL**

**13 Cheltenham Races excursion**
Paddington, Evesham, and return. Diesel-hauled throughout.
**Loco: TBA. NB**

**14 'Buxton Spa Express'**
Preston, Buxton, and return. Diesel-hauled between Preston and Manchester Victoria (outward only).
**Loco: TBA. RTC**

**14 'The South Wales Industrial Explorer'**
Rare tracks tour from Derby and return.
**Loco: 50008 *Thunderer* + Class 50 TBC. UKRT**

**18 'The Whitby Flyer'**
King's Cross, Whitby, and return. Steam-hauled between York and Whitby.
**Loco: Steam: TBA. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC**

**21 'Cumbrian Coast Express'**
Euston, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled from Carlisle to Carnforth.
**Loco: Steam: TBA. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC**

## Save the dates

Upcoming tours which, at time of going to press, were awaiting confirmation or additional details.

### March

**21 'Dracula's Wardrobe'**
Whitby excursion.
**2x Class 20s + HST (loco-hauled). UKRT**

**28 Rare track outing**
Heritage traction, modern depots.
**Motive power TBC. UKRT**

### April

**11 East Somerset Railway excursion**
**DEMU: 1001. HD**

**The information in this list was correct at the time of going to press. We strongly advise you confirm details of a particular trip with the promoter concerned.**

## Tour promoters

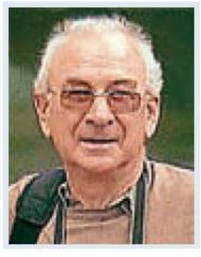
A1SLT A1 Steam Locomotive Trust 01325 488215
BEL Belmond Pullman 0845 0772 222
BLS Branch Line Society branchline.uk
HD Hastings Diesels hastingsdiesels.co.uk
IC Intercity 0800 038 5364
MP Midland Pullman midlandpullman.com
NB Northern Belle northernbelle.co.uk
PNP PNP Events londonthe polarexpressride.com
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
ST Saphos Trains 0800 038 5320
UKR UK Railtours 01438 715050
VT Vintage Trains 0121 708 4960
WCR West Coast Railways 0333 996 6720

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# WITH FULL REGULATOR
## LOCOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE THEN AND NOW



**Don Benn** looks at Southern Region Pacifics Nos. 34028 *Eddystone* on the 'Varsity Explorer' and 35019 *French Line CGT* on the 'Atlantic Coast Express' in July 1964, compares timings for No. 34013 *Okehampton* with 'Warship' D822, and shares some fast runs on the South West Main Line with a selection of Class 50s.

I START this column with the account by Alan Rawlings of the Rugby to Crewe section of the 'Varsity Explorer' on Saturday, October 25, 2025, details of which are shown in Table One.

Alan writes: "The 'Varsity Explorer' was not only the first steam charter to travel along the East/West Route (EWR) from Oxford to Bletchley, but it also presented an attractive opportunity to see how the newcomer to the main line fleet in the form of Bulleid West Country class No. 34028 *Eddystone* would fare on the West Coast Main Line. Southall to Chester is beyond the range of a Bulleid with a full tender of coal; as there were no plans to top up the coal en route, the diesel on the back of the train helped move things along, as well as providing essential power for the stock and facilitate turning at Chester. Such is the diesel-dependent nature of main line steam currently in some circumstances.

"Despite the busy ex-GWR main line, the run from Reading to Oxford was swift and unchecked, with arrival at Oxford Parkway eight minutes early. Water was taken at the site of the former Claydon station before *Eddystone* joined the WCML via the High Level station at Bletchley. The charter then ran via Northampton to its second water stop at Rugby. The 10-mile climb from Northampton to the summit before Watford Lodge Tunnel is an almost continuous 1-in-230 gradient that was tackled fairly effortlessly, despite the gross load of more than 500 tons. With a summit speed of 57mph from a pass of Northampton at 20mph, it was clear that the diesel (No. 47812) on the rear wasn't there just for the ride.

"The accompanying Table One is a record of the onward run from Rugby to Crewe, of which the first few miles were taken at a leisurely pace before slipping out onto the single northbound line behind a Liverpool Lime Street service at Brinklow Junction. We then enjoyed an hour of fast running, apart from speed restrictions, where *Eddystone* was largely allowed to manage the train on its own except on the climb up and through Searchlight Junction. A late departure was converted into a four-minute early arrival at Crewe, where a final supply of water was taken from a hydrant, before the train continued to Chester. After an early hiccup, *Eddystone* is establishing itself as a useful addition to the limited air-braked fleet and will hopefully ease some of the pressures on future charter operations under the West Coast umbrella."

### TABLE ONE: RUGBY TO CREWE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date** | Saturday, October 25, 2025 |
| **Train** | 'The Varsity Explorer' |
| **Loco** | Rebuilt West Country class 4-6-2 No. 34028 *Eddystone* |
| **Load** | 11 coaches + 47812, 494 tons tare, 520 tons gross |
| **Crew** | Phil Cowley and Josh Young |
| **Recorder** | Alan Rawlings from eighth coach |

| | miles | sched | mins | secs | speed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rugby No. 1 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | 6 late |
| Trent Valley Jct | 0.83 | 3.00 | 02 | 23 | 27 |
| Newsbold Jct | 1.83 | 4.00 | 04 | 27 | 36 |
| Easenhall F/B | 3.97 | | 08 | 17 | 28* sigs |
| Brinklow Jct | 5.40 | 12.00 | 10 | 48 | 43 to FL |
| Shilton | 8.66 | | 14 | 12 | 66 |
| Bulkington | 11.00 | | 16 | 16 | 68/70 |
| Attleborough S Jct | 12.64 | 19.30 | 18 | 00 | 54 to SL |
| Nuneaton | 14.55 | 21.00 | 19 | 49 | 69 |
| Quarry Lane OB | 18.49 | | 23 | 14 | 60 |
| Atherstone | 19.77 | | 23 | 33 | 57* |
| Polesworth | 24.00 | | 28 | 18 | 72 |
| Amington Jct | 26.50 | 32.00 | 30 | 25 | 71 |
| Tamworth Low Lvl | 27.52 | | 31 | 15 | 70 |
| River Tame Viaduct | 29.92 | | 33 | 19 | 72 |
| Hademore | 31.11 | | 34 | 20 | 70 |
| Lichfield TV | 33.75 | 40.30 | 36 | 40 | 66 |
| Curborough Jct | 35.24 | | 37 | 43 | 63 |
| Armitage | 38.57 | | 41 | 46 | 71 |
| Rugeley TV | 41.78 | 48.00 | 43 | 42 | 73 |
| Colwich Jct | 44.56 | 53.00 | 45 | 58 | 72 |
| Shugborough Tnl In | 46.07 | | 47 | 23 | 58 |
| Shugborough Tnl Out | 46.51 | | 47 | 56 | 56 |
| Milford | 46.95 | 55.00 | 48 | 20 | 55 |
| Baswich Viaduct | 49.16 | | 50 | 47 | 53 |
| Stafford | 51.02 | 60.00 | 53 | 07 | 46* |
| Doxey Jct | 51.50 | | 54 | 02 | 54 |
| Great Bridgeford | 54.37 | | 56 | 20 | 71 |
| Searchlight Lane Jct | 56.19 | 64.30 | 58 | 02 | 65 |
| Heamies OB | 57.30 | | 58 | 58 | 73 |
| Babnall Wharf | 58.41 | | 59 | 59 | 73 |
| Standon Bridge | 60.67 | | 61 | 40 | 72 |
| Stableford | 63.09 | | 63 | 42 | 71 |
| Whitmore | 64.80 | | 65 | 12 | 69 |
| Madeley | 67.47 | 74.00 | 67 | 19 | 73/70* |
| Betley Road | 70.55 | | 70 | 0 | 72 |
| Basford Hall Jct | 73.59 | 81.30 | 72 | 54 | 47 |
| Crewe No. 12 | 75.34 | 88.00 | 77 | 50 | 4 early |

* brakes or speed restriction

### Magnificent Marchants

Looking back now to the real days of steam and the week beginning July 20, 1964, when Fred Hoare and Pete Allen were in charge of the Down 'Atlantic Coast Express' (ACE) between Waterloo and Salisbury. I was with my brother Bryan for most of the week and we saw some of the very fine running, but I missed the best run. However, on the Monday, Merchant Navy No. 35019 *French Line CGT* turned in a very good run with 12 coaches for 435 tons; Table Two shows the details. Fred knew there was a track relaying speed restriction at Allington, so all week he tried to get time in hand for that. The start from Waterloo was very slow (possibly without a banker), but with 78mph at Byfleet we were still through Woking within schedule, topping milepost 31 at 67mph, and pressed on with 82mph after Fleet. The severe signal check at Worting Junction was very unusual, but 88mph through Andover and 68mph over Grateley meant our




**No. 34028 arrives at Southampton with Railway Touring Company's 'Swanage Belle' from London Victoria on September 10, which was the Bulleid's first public main line outing.** DON BENN



**Pre-order Issue 342:** Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.




***Eddystone* simmers at Chester Middle Yard on October 25, 2025.** ALAN RAWLINGS

"We then enjoyed an hour of fast running, apart from speed restrictions, where *Eddystone* was largely allowed to manage the train on its own..."



**Left: On June 1, 1963, SR Merchant Navy No. 35019 *French Line CGT* is seen approaching Weybridge with the 1pm Bournemouth West to Waterloo working.** DON BENN

**Below: On February 18, 1983, Class 50 No. 50037 *Illustrious* is seen passing Clapham Junction with the 11.10am Waterloo to Exeter service.** DON BENN

## TABLE TWO: WATERLOO TO SALISBURY

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date** | Monday, July 20, 1964 |
| **Train** | 11am Waterloo to Ilfracombe |
| **Loco** | Merchant Navy class 4-6-2 No. 35019 *French Line CGT* |
| **Load** | 12 coaches, 406 tons tare, 435 tons gross |
| **Crew** | Fred Hoare and Pete Allen, Salisbury |
| **Recorder** | Don Benn |
| **Weather** | Cloudy |

| | miles | sched | mins | secs | speed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Waterloo | 0.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | R/T |
| Vauxhall | 1.29 | | 04 | 04 | 33 |
| Queens Road | 2.81 | | 05 | 57 | 50 |
| Clapham Junction | 3.93 | 7.00 | 07 | 38 | 39* |
| Earlsfield | 5.58 | | 09 | 58 | 50 |
| Wimbledon | 7.24 | | 11 | 52 | 53 |
| Raynes Park | 8.64 | | 13 | 17 | 60 |
| New Malden | 9.78 | | 14 | 25 | 65 |
| Berrylands | 10.98 | | 15 | 22 | 67 |
| Surbiton | 12.04 | | 16 | 27 | 69 |
| Hampton Court Jct | 13.34 | 17.30 | 17 | 34 | 72 |
| Esher | 14.39 | | 18 | 26 | 75 |
| Hersham | 15.91 | | 19 | 42 | 75½ |
| Walton | 17.08 | | 20 | 37 | 75 |
| Oatlands SB | 18.10 | | 21 | 29 | 72½ |
| Weybridge | 19.15 | | 22 | 19 | 74 |
| Byfleet | 20.40 | | 23 | 20 | 78 |
| West Byfleet | 21.68 | | 24 | 21 | 76½ |
| Woking | 24.29 | | 26 | 34 | 72 |
| Woking Jct | 24.74 | 27.30 | 26 | 53 | 71 |
| Brookwood | 27.99 | | 29 | 43 | 69½ |
| Pirbright Jct | 29.65 | | 31 | 09 | 68/69½ |
| MP 31 | 31.00 | | 32 | 25 | 67 |
| Sturt Lane Jct | 32.20 | | 33 | 27 | 71½ |
| Farnborough | 33.20 | | 34 | 20 | 74 |
| Fleet | 36.48 | | 36 | 54 | 78/82 |
| Winchfield | 39.83 | | 39 | 24 | 79/77½ |
| Hook | 42.16 | | 41 | 15 | 80/78 |
| Newnham Siding | 43.70 | | 42 | 24 | 81` |
| Basingstoke | 47.75 | | 45 | 40 | 68 |
| Worting Jct | 50.30 | 50.00 | 49 | 02 | 34* sigs |
| MP 51 | 51.00 | | 50 | 03 | 47 |
| Oakley | 52.38 | | 51 | 36 | 57 |
| Overton | 55.55 | | 54 | 38 | 74 |
| Whitchurch | 59.10 | | 57 | 31 | 81/78½ |
| Hurstbourne | 61.14 | | 58 | 56 | 82 |
| MP 62½ | 62.50 | | 60 | 04 | 76½ |
| Andover | 66.35 | | 62 | 44 | 88 |
| Red Post Jct | 67.65 | | 63 | 47 | 80 |
| MP 68¾ | 68.75 | | 64 | 39 | 82 |
| Grateley | 72.70 | | 67 | 44 | 68/73 |
| Allington SB | 75.60 | | 71 | 31 | 19* pws |
| Porton | 78.29 | | 74 | 50 | 72/82 |
| Tunnel Junction | 82.56 | 77.00 | 78 | 35 | 50* |
| Salisbury | 83.66 | 80.00 | 81 | 18 | 1½ late |

* brakes or speed restriction
net time 75 minutes
start-to-stop average 61.74mph



## DOWN 'ATLANTIC COAST EXPRESS' WORKINGS (WEEK COMMENCING JULY 20, 1964)

| | | July 20 | | | July 21 | | | July 22 | | | July 23 | | | July 24 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Loco no.** | | 35019 | | | 35025 | | | 35009 | | | 35022 | | | 35028 | | |
| **Load (for tons)** | | 12 for 435 | | | 11 for 405 | | | 11 for 405 | | | 11 for 405 | | | 11 for 408 | | |
| **Recorder** | | Don Benn | | | Don Benn | | | Don Benn | | | Bryan Benn | | | Bryan Benn | | |
| | **miles** | **mins** | **secs** | **speed** | **mins** | **secs** | **speed** | **mins** | **secs** | **speed** | **mins** | **secs** | **speed** | **mins** | **secs** | **speed** |
| Waterloo | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | R/T | 00 | 00 | 2 late | 00 | 00 | R/T | 00 | 00 | 1 late | 00 | 00 | 2 late |
| Clapham Junction | 3.93 | 07 | 38 | | 07 | 26 | | 07 | 29 | | 07 | 47 | | 07 | 28 | |
| Byfleet | 20.40 | 23 | 20 | 78 | 23 | 19 | 78 | 26 | 05 | * | 25 | 04 | 75 | 22 | 23 | 79 |
| Woking | 24.29 | 26 | 34 | 72 | 26 | 31 | 72 | 30 | 38 | * | 28 | 16 | 72 | 25 | 23 | 73 |
| MP31 | 31.00 | 32 | 25 | 67 | 32 | 12 | 69 | 39 | 09 | 63 | 34 | 02 | 69 | 31 | 03 | 70 |
| Max after | | | | 82 | | | 80 | | | 83 | | | 83 | | | 83 |
| Basingstoke | 47.75 | 45 | 40 | 68 | 45 | 41 | 69 | 52 | 24 | 69 | 46 | 49 | 69 | 43 | 54 | 65 |
| Worting Jct | 50.30 | 49 | 02 | 34* | 47 | 56 | 67 | 54 | 34 | 70 | 49 | 04 | 65 | 45 | 09 | 65 |
| Andover | 66.35 | 62 | 44 | 88 | 61 | 09 | 91 | 66 | 49 | 90 | 61 | 26 | 92 | 58 | 28 | 91 |
| Grateley | 72.70 | 67 | 44 | 68 | 66 | 01 | 70 | 71 | 43 | 70 | 66 | 13 | 71 | 63 | 14 | 69 |
| Porton max | 78.29 | 74 | 50 | 82 | 72 | 46 | 83 | 78 | 34 | 87 | 72 | 52 | 84 | 70 | 00 | 84 |
| Salisbury | 83.66 | 61 | 18 | | 78 | 49 | | 84 | 24 | | 81 | 15 | | 77 | 32 | |
| Notes | | net time 75 mins<br>signal check Wortng Jct | | | net time 75 mins | | | net time 73½ mins<br>slow line Esher to Woking | | | net time 74 mins<br>sigs to 36 at Wiimbledon<br>sigs stop outside Salisbury | | | net time 72 mins<br>sigs stop outside Salisbury<br>half a minute early at Salisbury | | |

Driver Fred Hoare and fireman Pete Allen, Salisbury shed. Permanent Way Restriction to 20mph at Allington every day

loss on the schedule was restricted to one minute 18 seconds in a net time of 75 minutes, excellent for a locomotive which was not in best of condition with 12 on.

The next day, the locomotive was classmate No. 35025 *Lamport and Holt Line* (another locomotive not in perfect condition) on 11 coaches for 369/405 tons. We left two minutes late and ran down in 78 minutes 49 seconds, net also 75 minutes. Similar running but with no signal check: 78mph was recorded at Byfleet, 69mph at MP31, 79mph after Fleet, 67mph at Battledown, 91mph through Andover, and an excellent 70mph over Grateley – another fast finish. Boiler pressure was down to 180lb at Whitchurch, so Fred ran easily until after Hurstbourne and then let fly!

On Wednesday, July 22, we went down to Basingstoke on the 7.20am from Waterloo behind BR Standard Class 5 4-6-0 No. 73118 on four coaches and four vans (213 tons tare) to catch the 8.46am back to Waterloo, which had No. 34036 *Westward Ho!* on 200 tons. This was crewed by Fred and Pete and was the Up working for the Down 'ACE.'My brother and I sat with Fred on a sleeper on the platform in the sun and watched the 9.33am arrival at Waterloo storm past on the up fast at 75mph, a moment which still lives in my memory. A signal stop at Woking and another check after Vauxhall did not prevent us from arriving on time.

And so to the 'ACE,' which had No. 35009 *Shaw Savill*, in excellent condition. We had 11 on again for 376/405 tons, but a broken rail after Esher meant it was onto the slow line from there to Woking, which was passed 4¼ minutes late at 26mph. Recovery was good: 63½mph at MP31, 82½mph after Fleet, 83½mph at Newnham, 69mph Basingstoke after slight easing, which was followed by acceleration to 70mph at Battledown. Still 4¾ minutes down at Worting, we then flew, with 90mph achieved at Andover and 70mph minimum Grateley. At 87mph down Porton bank, we actually gained 10 seconds from Worting despite the 24mph restriction at Allington. Actual time was 84 minutes and 24 seconds and net time 73½ minutes – my best ever on the 'ACE.'

There, my week on the 'ACE' ended, but Bryan was on the trips on July 23/24. His run behind No. 35028 *Clan Line* on July 24 was the best actual and net time of the week, with 77 minutes 32 seconds actual and 73 minutes net. I think he was a bit conservative with this as 72 minutes may have been nearer to the mark. No. 35022 *Holland-Amerika Line* the previous day was also very good in 74 minutes net. The table summaries that fabulous week close to the end of the 'ACE.' As we have seen, Fred Hoare went on the produce some more great runs and I think retired in late 1965.

Moving on, Table Three shows two more runs with Fred driving and Pete as fireman/second man, this time on the 5pm from Waterloo to Woking. First is No. 34013 *Okehampton* showing its paces with a light six-coach load of 220 tons. Fred just let the locomotive run, producing one of my fastest times of 25 minutes 53 seconds, start-to-stop and 82½mph at Byfteet. I think this is my second fastest with steam, beaten only by the extraordinary run with BR 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75072 on three coaches in 23 minutes 53 seconds on May 18, 1964. We were through Clapham Junction in five minutes 44 seconds after 60mph at Queens Road, and 82mph at Byfleet completed this all-time steam record; Bob Grainger from Nine Elms was the driver.

The second run shows how Warship Class 42 D822 compares with 10 coaches for 360 tons. It must have been worked very hard to produce the time of 24 minutes 55 seconds, with such a load helped by a fast start and 85mph at Byfleet. It is quite remarkable that all three runs had clear roads.

## TABLE THREE: WATERLOO TO WOKING

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | Saturday, April 4, 1964 | | | | | Date | Saturday, September 26, 1964 | | | | |
| **Train** | 5pm Waterloo to Salisbury | | | | | Train | 5pm Waterloo to Salisbury | | | | |
| **Loco** | Rebuilt West Country Class 4-6-2 No. 34013 *Okehampton* | | | | | Loco | Class 42 Hydraulic Bo-Bo D822 *Hercules* | | | | |
| **Load** | 6 coaches, 205 tons tare, 220 tons gross | | | | | Load | 10 coaches, 334 tons tare, 360 tons gross | | | | |
| **Crew** | Fred Hoare and Pete Allen, Salisbury | | | | | Crew | Fred Hoare and Pete Allen, Salisbury | | | | |
| **Recorder** | Don Benn | | | | | Recorder | Don Benn | | | | |
| **Weather** | Cold and damp | | | | | Weather | Fine but damp | | | | |
| | **miles** | **sched** | **mins** | **secs** | **speed** | **sched** | **mins** | **secs** | **speed** |
| Waterloo | 0.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | R/T | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | R/T |
| Vauxhall | 1.29 | | 03 | 25 | 35 | | 02 | 56 | 41/53½ |
| Queens Road | 2.81 | | 05 | 14 | 55 | | 04 | 39 | 53 |
| Clapham Junction | 3.93 | 7.00 | 06 | 47 | 41* | 7.00 | 06 | 12 | 41* |
| MP 5 | 5.00 | | 08 | 09 | 46½ | | 07 | 45 | 45½ |
| Earlsfield | 5.58 | | 08 | 58 | 53 | | 08 | 27 | 53½ |
| Wimbledon | 7.24 | | 10 | 41 | 60½ | | 10 | 12 | 59½ |
| Raynes Park | 8.64 | | 11 | 59 | 63½ | | 11 | 32 | 64 |
| New Malden | 9.78 | | 13 | 03 | 65 | | 12 | 35 | 70 |
| Berrylands | 10.98 | | 14 | 05 | 66½ | | 13 | 34 | 72 |
| Surbiton | 12.04 | | 15 | 05 | 67 | | 14 | 30 | 73 |
| Hampton Court Jct | 13.34 | 18.30 | 16 | 13 | 70½ | 18.30 | 15 | 33 | 77 |
| Esher | 14.39 | | 17 | 08 | 71 | | 16 | 21 | 80 |
| Hersham | 15.91 | | 18 | 27 | 73 | | 17 | 30 | 82 |
| Walton | 17.08 | | 19 | 25 | 72½ | | 18 | 21 | 80 |
| Oatlands Box | 18.12 | | 20 | 17 | 70 | | 19 | 09 | 78 |
| Weybridge | 19.15 | | 21 | 09 | 74 | | 19 | 55 | 82½ |
| Byfleet | 20.40 | | 22 | 07 | 82½ | | 20 | 53 | 85 |
| West Byfleet | 21.68 | | 23 | 04 | 80 | | 21 | 49 | 82 |
| Woking | 24.29 | 31.00 | 25 | 53 | 5¼ early | 31.00 | 24 | 55 | 6 early |

### High-speed 50s

The 1980s was the era of the Class 50s on the Waterloo to Exeter services and I timed a lot of runs with them. They were powerful and enigmatic machines with 2700bhp and were allowed to run at 100mph, aside from on the Southern Main Line to the west where the limit was 90mph from Basingstoke to Salisbury and 85mph beyond. On October 22, 1986, I was on the 9.10am Waterloo to Exeter service and the section from Woking to Salisbury is shown. No. 50026 *Indomitable* had eight coaches for 275 tons and a crew determined to show off their steed to a footplate guest. Table Four shows the details of this very fast run. A speed of 80mph was clocked by MP31, which was fast,



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**A slightly scruffy-looking No. 50035 *Ark Royal* pauses at Salisbury with the 9.10am ex-Waterloo working on February 28, 1986.** DON BENN

## "The sustained 70mph up the 1-in-140 of Porton bank was out of the top drawer, followed by 102mph down to Red Post Junction."

but not my fastest – that was with West Country class No. 34001 *Exeter* on July 4, 1967, when, with Gordon Porter driving and 180 tons, we passed the summit at 83½mph in seven minutes 14 seconds and included changing from the local line to the main line at Woking Junction.

No. 34001 then continued with speed between 88mph and 92mph before crossing back to the slow line outside Basingstoke, reached in 20 minutes and 43 seconds, net 19½ minutes.

Back to No. 50026, which carried on with speed up in the 90s, touching 100mph in the Newnham dip and a time of 18 mins 10 seconds, believed to be a loco-hauled record. On to Andover and a maximum of 102mph recorded at Hurstbourne, followed by 74mph minimum after Grateley and a third 'ton' at Porton. I came back with the same crew on the 9.38am from Exeter and this time it was the uphill work which excelled. The locomotive was No. 50006 *Neptune* on nine coaches for 305 tons, the load limit for the class. The sustained 70mph up the 1-in-140 of Porton bank was out of the top drawer, followed by 102mph down to Red Post Junction. Even better was the 92mph reached at milepost 53½, and 94mph at Oakley after the long climb out of Andover (believed to be a record with this load). We may have caught adverse signals at Worting Junction but still accelerated to 80mph again afterwards. All my Class 50 runs were with Mk. 2 carriage stock.

Next time we will have more from the South West Main Line. HR

### TABLE FOUR: WOKING TO SALISBURY

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date** | Wednesday, October 22, 1986 |
| **Train** | 9.10am Waterloo to Exeter |
| **Loco** | Class 50 Co-Co No. 50026 *Indomitable* |
| **Load** | 8 coaches 256½ tons tare, 275 tons gross |
| **Weather** | Damp, rain at times |
| **Recorder** | Don Benn from first coach |

| | miles | sched | mins | secs | speed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Woking | 00.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | R/T |
| Woking Jct | 0.46 | | 01 | 02 | 41½ |
| MP 26 | 1.71 | | 02 | 35 | 60 |
| Brookwood | 3.70 | | 04 | 22 | 72 |
| Pirbright Jct | 5.20 | | 05 | 40 | 76 |
| MP 31 | 6.71 | | 06 | 46 | 80 |
| Sturt Lane Jct | 7.86 | | 07 | 38 | 86½ |
| Farnborough | 8.91 | | 08 | 19 | 90 |
| MP 35 | 10.71 | | 09 | 29 | 95 |
| Fleet | 12.21 | | 10 | 26 | 94 |
| MP 38 | 13.71 | | 11 | 22 | 99 |
| Winchfield | 15.54 | | 12 | 28 | 97/96 |
| MP 41 | 16.71 | | 13 | 15 | 98/99 |
| Hook | 17.87 | | 13 | 59 | 98 |
| MP 43 | 18.71 | | 14 | 29 | 97 |
| Newnham Siding | 19.41 | | 14 | 54 | 100 |
| MP 46 | 21.71 | | 16 | 19 | 94 |
| Basingstoke | 23.46 | 21.00 | 18 | 10 | 2¾ early |
| | 0.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | 1¼ late |
| MP 49 | 1.35 | | 02 | 08 | 51 |
| Worting Jct | 2.55 | 4.00 | 03 | 26 | 62 |
| MP 51 | 3.35 | | 04 | 07 | 67 |
| Oakley | 4.63 | | 05 | 13 | 80 |
| MP 53½ | 5.60 | | 06 | 08 | 82 |
| Overton | 7.80 | | 07 | 32 | 93 |
| Whitchurch | 11.35 | | 09 | 49 | 98 |
| Hurstbourne | 13.39 | | 11 | 00 | 102 |
| MP 62½ | 14.85 | | 11 | 53 | 90 |
| MP 64 | 16.35 | | 12 | 57 | 86 |
| Andover | 18.60 | 17.30 | 15 | 21 | 1 early |
| | 0.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | ½ late |
| Red Post Jct | 1.30 | | 02 | 13 | 52½ |
| MP 68¾ | 2.50 | | 03 | 21 | 70/75½ |
| MP 71 | 4.75 | | 05 | 11 | 74 |
| Grateley | 6.35 | | 06 | 29 | 74 |
| MP 73¼ | 7.00 | | 07 | 02 | 74½ |
| Allington Box | 9.25 | | 08 | 42 | 88 |
| Porton | 11.90 | | 10 | 26 | 100 |
| MP 81 | 14.75 | | 12 | 13 | 96* |
| | | | sigs stop | | |
| MP 82¼ | 16.00 | | 14 | 06 | 0* |
| | | | 16 | 44 | |
| Tunnel Junction | 16.21 | 15.30 | 17 | 23 | 36 |
| | | | sigs | | 2* |
| Salisbury | 17.31 | 17.30 | 20 | 27 | 3½ late |

* brakes or speed restriction

net time Andover to Salisbury 15¼ minutes

start-to-stop averages

Woking to Basingstoke 77.48mph – a loco-hauled record

Basingstoke to Andover 72.63mph

### TABLE FIVE: SALISBURY TO BASINGSTOKE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date** | Wednesday, October 22, 1986 |
| **Train** | 9.38am Exeter St Davids to Waterloo |
| **Engine** | Class 50 Co-Co No. 50006 *Neptune* |
| **Load** | 9 coaches, 289 tons tare, 305 tons gross |
| **Position** | Rear |
| **Recorder** | Don Benn |
| **Weather** | Damp, rain from Andover |

| | miles | Sched | mins | secs | speed | gradient |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Salisbury | 0.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | 1 min late | |
| Tunnel Junction | 1.10 | 3.00 | 02 | 11 | 53 | 610R |
| MP 81 | 2.54 | | 03 | 36 | 66½ | 169R |
| MP 79 | 4.54 | | 05 | 21 | 70 | 169R |
| Porton | 5.37 | | 06 | 04 | 70½ | 140R |
| Allington Box | 8.06 | | 08 | 16 | 77½ | 735R |
| MP 73¼ | 10.29 | | 09 | 57 | 82 | 440R |
| Grateley | 10.96 | | 10 | 24 | 88 | 165F |
| MP 71 | 12.54 | | 11 | 24 | 98 | 165F |
| MP 68¾ | 14.79 | | 12 | 45 | 102 | 264F/330R |
| Red Post Jct | 16.01 | | 13 | 30 | 93 | 350F |
| Andover | 17.31 | 18.30 | 15 | 07 | | |
| | 0.00 | 0.00 | 00 | 00 | ¼ min late | |
| MP 64 | 2.35 | | 03 | 11 | 61 | 220F |
| MP 62½ | 3.85 | | 04 | 35 | 64½ | 178R |
| Hurstbourne | 5.21 | | 05 | 41 | 78 | 275F/194R |
| Whitchurch | 7.25 | | 07 | 11 | 83 | 194R/level |
| Overton | 10.80 | | 09 | 42 | 90 | 550R |
| MP 53½ | 12.85 | | 11 | 03 | 92 | |
| 550R/267F | | | | | | |
| Oakley | 13.97 | | 11 | 46 | 94 | level |
| Worting Jct | 16.05 | 15.30 | 13 | 34 | 60* | 249F |
| MP 49 | 17.35 | | 14 | 34 | 80 | 249F |
| Basingstoke | 18.60 | 18.00 | 15 | 46 | 2 mins BT | |

* brakes or speed restriction

Mk. 2 stock



**Above: Driver Fred Hoare alights from No. 34077 *603 Squadron* at Salisbury on August 21, 1965, after working the 2.13pm from Exmouth.** DAVIDSPRACKLAND




**Class 42 'Warship' D822 *Hercules* passes Raynes Park with the 6.20am from Exeter Central to Waterloo on April 3, 1965.** DON BENN

# PEOPLE IN THE PICTURE

As volunteer-led railway preservation approaches its diamond jubilee, we shine a light on just a handful of those who help keep the trains running. **Owen Hayward** curates a selection of photography, submitted by *Heritage Railway's* contributors, where human presence has helped enhance – or even become – the focus of the scene.

We've all been there. You've set yourself up for that perfect shot... but someone has stepped into your framing. To many, this completely writes off the planned photograph – but for others, it opens up a new opportunity for something different.

There is no denying that for railway photographers, the stars are usually what's on the rails. Whether it is trying to recreate a shot from five decades ago, capturing a vista of a train in a stunning landscape, or simply practising a 'bog-standard' shot as you hone your skills, it is all too easy to become entranced by your choice of traction, ditching matters should the stock or light be wrong. All too often, we photographers can overlook what is at the heart of our heritage railway movement: people.

While railway preservation as a whole stretches back much further than the opening of the Talyllyn Railway as a volunteer-led endeavour in 1951, without those people giving up their time week in, week out, year after year, our heritage sector today would likely look different to what we currently enjoy. Volunteers come from all walks of life: there are broad age ranges, diverse ethnic backgrounds, and unique stories. For some, it is the camaraderie of working in close-knit teams to achieve a common goal that drives their passion, while for others, it is customer engagement. Not every volunteer is necessarily passionate about trains, but they all care about making sure their railway is the best it can be.

Yet, despite their commitments to the sector, they can so often be overlooked when it comes to photography, their presence taken for granted.

## A period look

Most railways will have some form of uniform policy specified for customer-facing roles, be they porters on the platforms or staff in the shops. While not normally strictly enforced, most people in such roles are normally turned out quite smartly and do well to give some representation – accurate or otherwise – to how they looked in the heyday of steam and diesel.

There are, of course, some places, like the living history museum that is Beamish, where all the stops are pulled out to provide staff and volunteers with authentic uniforms for the period and for the roles being fulfilled, but there are also individual volunteers who will go to great lengths to research and acquire apparel at their own expense to enhance their appearance to customers. This does not stop at the obvious shirt, trousers or tie – some will seek out details such as the correct design of badges, pocket watches, guard's keys... even the style of buttons on a waistcoat are taken into consideration.

And there are a huge number of roles beyond platform staff. Some lines require crossing keepers, such as at Oakworth on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway in Yorkshire.

Graham Nuttall visited in March last year and took an opportunity to capture what is a fairly routine activity, but one that so often goes undocumented, saying: "The attraction here was to portray the individual, often lonely, responsibility taken by the signalman/crossing keeper to control the safe passage of trains, pedestrians and road traffic in a more demanding era, where the traffic intensity far outstrips historic levels."

The KWVR – in particular, Oakworth station – is well-known for its starring role in the 1970 EMI film The Railway Children and so is often frequented by photographers. There are some railways where stations have changed beyond recognition since entering preservation, but many still capture



**Manning the gates may be routine for lines with level crossings, but how many of us stop and observe or photograph this important role during our visits?** GRAHAM NUTTALL




**On January 20, 2023, a GCR volunteer attempts to get the turntable in motion, on which was sat 8F No. 48305.** ROBERT FALCONER

the essence of their heydays. Another moment that caught Graham's attention was a platform staff member tending to the gas lamps.

"I was attracted by the determination of the station staff at Oakworth, at 10 in the morning on a dull February day, to coax this recalcitrant period gas lamp into life, ensuring visitors could see the 'Railway Children' station at its best," he recounts.

"The Swan Vesta matches in the lamplighter's left hand were an accidental added point of historic interest."

He continues: "The inspiration for both photographs lies in a deeply held appreciation of the untold hours freely given and the considerable responsibilities shouldered by tens of thousands of people over the past 75 years to ensure that heritage railways safely provide a window into the past for successive generations."

## In the moment

It's not all seriousness, though – fun moments sometimes present themselves 'on the fly,' as it were, which can result in unexpectedly interesting scenes.

This approach of capturing live moments is something shared by Adam Ashford. "I enjoy capturing a chance moment, whether that's a member of crew carrying out a duty or a fellow enthusiast caught in the act," he explains.

"Having reenactors always adds a little something extra to an event. The Great Central's Railways At Work event has been well-known for recreating railway scenes from years gone by, in particular the loading and unloading of goods traffic at different stations. The scene here was nearing the end of one such demonstration at Quorn & Woodhouse. I particularly liked how this chap was clearly looking to take a bit of a break from the job, having perched himself in the open door of a van, but then looking upon the already unloaded parcels, didn't seem overly enthused about continuing – a feeling that I'm sure most of us have had at one time or another."

Watching the activity of railway workers means you can often spot moments to capture that make great scenes. As well as offering a spacious goods yard, Quorn also has a turntable which is occasionally put to use for changing the direction of the Great Central Railway's locomotives.

On one such occasion, Robert Falconer caught LMS 8F No. 48305 being taken for a spin: "It can be hard to capture movement in a two-dimensional photograph, but here the railwaymanleaning at an extreme angle on the lever with one foot up shows the immense effort being put into getting the very heavy locomotive moving as it towers above. It







**Above: A reenactor at Quorn & Woodhouse looks less than enthused to see a stack of parcels waiting for him to load into the box van.** ADAM ASHFORD

**Left: In a world where LED lighting is all the rage, the retainment of authentic gas lighting at Oakworth allows for moments like this to be witnessed, whereby volunteers are required to open up the casing to light the flame.** GRAHAM NUTTALL




**One can only image how chilly the crew of 'Ironclad' No. 52044 were in their open cab during the KWVR's March 2023 steam gala. A layer of snow covers the LYR locomotive's tender as the fireman attempts to draw some of the coal pile forward at Keighley station.** ROBERT BATTY



**Jamie Green fills in the signaller's logbook inside Banbury North signalbox on September 23, 2016, a few months before its demolition.** MARTIN CREESE




**Matt Toms cuts the picture of a steam-era footplateman enjoying a brief moment between duties, taken during a photography session at Didcot on November 17, 2018.** MARTYN TATTAM

## "All too often, we photographers can overlook what is at the heart of our heritage railway movement: people."

shows the battle between man and machine, and he gives scale to how big the 8F is."

One thing we owe our volunteers great credit for is their unwavering efforts to keep trains running, often in unsavoury weather conditions. Be it blistering hot or freezing cold, many persevere to turn up for duty and keep trains running. In recent years, we have seen many lines graced with snowfall; while making for a scenic picture, the treacherous conditions often prove less than ideal.

In 2022, a cold snap in the south led to carriages suffering frost damage on the Spa Valley Railway, resulting in the cancellation of lucrative Polar Express services part way through the month of December. It could have been all too easy to throw in the towel and cancel the remaining trains, but volunteers worked tirelessly, often outdoors and on the frozen ground, to repair the damage and get things moving again.

Similarly, blizzards swept Yorkshire in 2023, dividing the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. Rather than cancelling dining services and a booked photographic charter, alterations were made and volunteers continued to turn up for duty, with trains running between Grosmont and Goathland only.

The Keighley & Worth Valley Railway's spring steam gala in March 2023 experienced similar circumstances when the night of March 8 and into the following morning saw temperatures plummet to -8 degrees and snowfall cover the landscape. Although this meant treacherous conditions on local roads, once again volunteers showed what they were capable of, shovelling platforms clear, thawing point rodding, and going to great lengths to minimise the disruption to ensure that the gala – one of the fixtures on many an enthusiast's calendar – went ahead as planned.

Robert Batty was one of many who, after spending 2½ hours digging himself out of his own driveway, braved the elements to photograph that event.

"There were tales of volunteers walking miles through the snow so they could start their shifts or clearing snow off of the platforms so that passengers were safe, and negotiating the running of railway filled with snow," he recounts.

Sometimes, it is not just the elements that present opportunities – it is time itself. In July 2016, Banbury North signalbox was decommissioned, ultimately being demolished the following March. Thankfully, a series of public open days were held before that, allowing visitors to see inside for one last time.

Martin Creese took the opportunity of one of these visits, where Network Rail signaller Jamie Green posed for photographs. "There is something about a signalbox at night – the soft lighting, peace between trains, and then




**The GCR's Armistice tribute on November 11, 2018, with a poppy-festooned Robinson O4 No. 63601 and military reenactors at Quorn & Woodhouse station.** GAVIN THOMSON

the rhythm of the railway," says Martin. "Jamie was magic that evening, just being the signalman, and this image captures the relaxed nature of a natural scene."

## Charter reliance

One of the most obvious (and reliable) times for employing people in scenes with photography specifically in mind is on photographic charters. The downside of an 'in the moment' image is that you are at the mercy of numerous other factors (weather, other visitors, constant movement and so on). When booking onto a charter, you can be fairly confident that, while the weather is still out of anyone's remit, most of these other factors can be controlled.

Didcot Railway Centre, set in the GWR locomotive shed dating from 1932, is one location perfectly suited to recreating on-shed scenes from days past. Inside here is where many a photographic charter tends to focus, with reenactors posing between or on the lines of static locomotives. In addition to the main shed, however, there is also the coaling stage outside. A charter in 2018 with GWR 1400 0-4-2T No. 1466 saw Martyn Tattam snap a carefully staged scene around this.

"We had done the main shots of the reenactors on and around the locomotive, but once it had gone a little quieter, Matthew Toms and I decided to take a shot of him alongside it lighting up a cigarette, something that would have been common around shed with crews back in the day," he says.

"With the locomotive in a decidedly grubby condition and Matt dressed to play the part, he added so much more to the scene, especially doing something much more different than is normal on a charter. It is a shot I have not been able to recreate since and takes pride of place in my collection. Who says you can't do something different on a charter?"



**A photography evening at Barrow Hill on September 28, 2022, with reenactors posing for scenes beyond the locomotives themselves, such as this man portraying lamp-lighting duties.** ROBERT FALCONER

The ability to control lighting during such sessions is often beneficial to ensuring that photographers walk away with clear images; however, some say the use of LED or other artificial light sources can create a spot of light on subjects which can be unnatural. During a session at Barrow Hill, Robert Falconer was able to capture a reenactor illuminated by the glow of his flare lamp, resulting in a much more natural finish and atmospheric look.

"The steam era was very labour-intensive, employing thousands of people," he explains. "One of the jobs done right across the land was lighting lamps to go on the trains or around stations and yards to be able to see in the dark hours.

"I like this picture showing how they were lit: straightforward naked flames, as there was no LED lighting then. In the dark shed, the flame created a warm light that made this gentleman's face glow."

While shed scenes are most common, sometimes the opportunity is taken to mark historic moments, such as Remembrance Day in 2018, when the Great Central Railway posed Robinson O4 2-8-0 No. 63601 in the yard at Quorn & Woodhouse for a photo shoot with reenactors in military attire. "This was one event I was really proud to have attended," said Gavin Thomson. "This shows all the˜hardwork the GCR volunteers had put in to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day, by decorating No. 63601's front with poppies and flags and renumbered it as ROD 1912. The locomotive was also paired with a wooden replica of a First World War tank which had been loaded onto a flat-bed wagon at Quorn & Woodhouse station, while reenactors dressed as soldiers stood to attention to complete the scene."

Whether prearranged or a mere chance moment, there are many ways that people can be incorporated into a photograph, helping to transform a scene.

As we celebrate 75 years of volunteer-led preservation, let's doff our figurative caps to those who have given up their time – past, present, or future – to fuel our hobby and bring us endless hours of joy. HR




SR Battle of Britain No. 34053 *Sir Keith Park* crosses Broom Lane bridge on the Spa Valley on December 7. Situated halfway between the stations of Tunbridge Wells West and Groombridge, it is set to be completely replaced over a six-week period commencing February 23.

# BUILDING BRIDGES: THE CHALLENGE OF 'UNGLAMOROUS' PROJECTS

Winter is traditionally a time for heritage lines to undertake the infrastructure work essential to keeping trains running, like the Spa Valley Railway, which is about to commence with the full replacement of one of its bridges. Despite their importance, such projects are often overlooked in fundraising, as **Owen Hayward** discovers.

As true as it is to say that without your trains, you have no railway, such a phrase can also apply to track and infrastructure. From the signalling that controls the movement right the way down to the sleepers on which rails sit, these are all part of the jigsaw of running and maintaining a heritage railway. Without one, you cannot have the other.

We have witnessed many substantial project undertakings in these areas over the last few years, with bridges having been a predominant focus. The Keighley & Worth Valley Railway undertook a £1.25 million renewal of Bridge 27 at Haworth in its biggest ever civil engineering project, while the North Yorkshire Moors Railway replaced one of these structures (coincidentally No. 27A) at Grosmont station. Recent repairs to bridges in the Swithland area have enabled the lifting of speed restrictions on the Great Central Railway. At the same time, the Bluebell Railway has, over several years, renewed lengthy sections of ageing track, such as those around Ketches Wood (outside Sheffield Park station) and Sharpthorne tunnel, for similar reasons, with further work set to take place in the new year period to complete some of this.

## Essential, but unglamorous?

These sorts of projects do not yield as much public favour as, say, a locomotive or vintage carriage overhaul, particularly when it comes to fundraising appeals. Rolling stock can often evoke emotional responses as people identify connections with their stories. In contrast, run-of-the-mill structures such as bridges, which sit in place and fulfil their intended purpose day in, day out, are often perceived as unglamorous and prove much harder to drum up support for – which, even when achieved, can see results vary drastically depending on the size of the organisation and the specific project in question.

Between February 23 and April 2, the Spa Valley Railway will undertake the replacement of the Broom Lane bridge, which lies between its Tunbridge Wells West and Groombridge stations. Built of steel in the 1890s, it has carried trains from the London Brighton & South Coast Railway right through to BR before the line was closed in 1985 and then revived as a heritage operation from 1996. Although it has remained in a safe condition for operational use, it has slowly been degrading over the years, with a speed restriction in place for trains crossing it.

In November 2024, an inspection of the steelwork revealed that this decay was increasing. With the locomotive sheds situated at Tunbridge Wells West and operation beyond Groombridge reliant on there being no possessions in effect on the adjacent Network Rail lines on the approach to Eridge, the loss of this particular structure is a huge risk to the Spa Valley's operations – without it, the five-mile branch becomes severely curtailed, almost to a point where some might argue it would not be worth running a service.

"In recent years, when we've had to run a shorter section of line to Groombridge, usually due to engineering works on the Eridge section, visitor numbers have declined. They have come to expect a journey to Eridge, and when that isn't available, they plan their visit for another day," general manager Jonnie Pay pointed out. "The replacement of Broom Lane Bridge is not just important for the Spa Valley

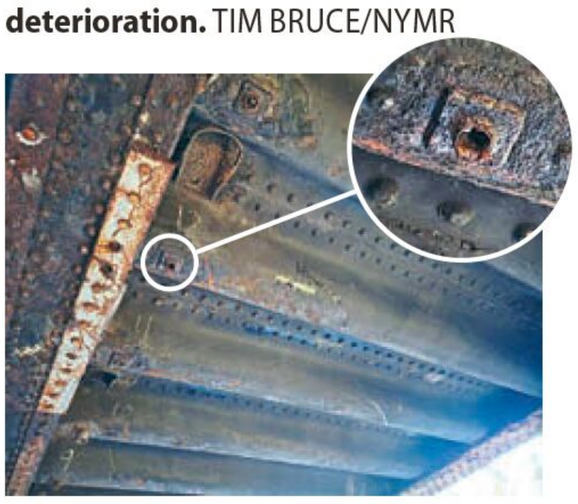


**Bridge 27 at Haworth on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway was replaced in the autumn of 2024. While this project benefitted from substantial external financial aid, the Spa Valley Railway has not been so fortunate and will need to pay for its own bridge replacement from its reserves.** KWVR



**Other recent bridge work involved bridge 27A at Goathland on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, which crosses West Beck river to provide road access to the station. The supporting steel girders had suffered from serious deterioration.** TIM BRUCE/NYMR



**A view of the underside of Broom Lane bridge, where evidence of its decay can be seen, including around the drainage outlets.** ALAN CUDLIPP/SPVR




**Broom Lane bridge has suffered from several strikes in recent years, which have also resulted in damage to the structure.** ALAN CUDLIPP/SPVR

**Left: *Sir Keith Park* (dressed up for the railway's Polar Express services) creeps across Broom Lane bridge. A temporary speed restriction has been in effect on the structure for several years, but this will soon be a thing of the past thanks to the impending replacement.** OWEN HAYWARD

Railway – it's essential to its future. It has been a project we've been working on for several years, and we have been putting money aside, but that sudden discovery of the increasing rate of deterioration saw it jump right to the top of the list.

"This discovery was further compounded at the time by the collapse of a culvert and partial failure of an embankment three-quarters of a mile away from Tunbridge Wells West. Repairing this culvert and the embankment came at a cost of £75,000, which impacted the money we could continue to put aside for Broom Lane Bridge."

However, thanks to savings put aside, the SpVR had enough funds to commission the design work for the replacement structure, with the contract awarded to Beaver Bridges at the end of 2024. An original estimate of £300,000 to build the replacement has risen sharply to about £500,000 – a lot of money, whichever way you look at it. This increase has been due to several external factors, including steel prices and the bridge's complex location.

In January last year, the railway formally launched an appeal to raise this amount. Whereas similar work on other railways saw financial assistance though avenues such as the UK Government's Levelling Up programme, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and, in the case of the NYMR, the North York Moors National Park, or perhaps gained industry support, as the Severn Valley Railway did following the embankment collapse at Mor Brook, the Spa Valley has unfortunately not yet been as lucky.˜

The SpVR submitted an expression of interest to the NLHF; sadly, the NLHF turned it down, citing that the project "did not address the NLHF's investment principles." Of course, this does not mean there is no funding available whatsoever for the project.

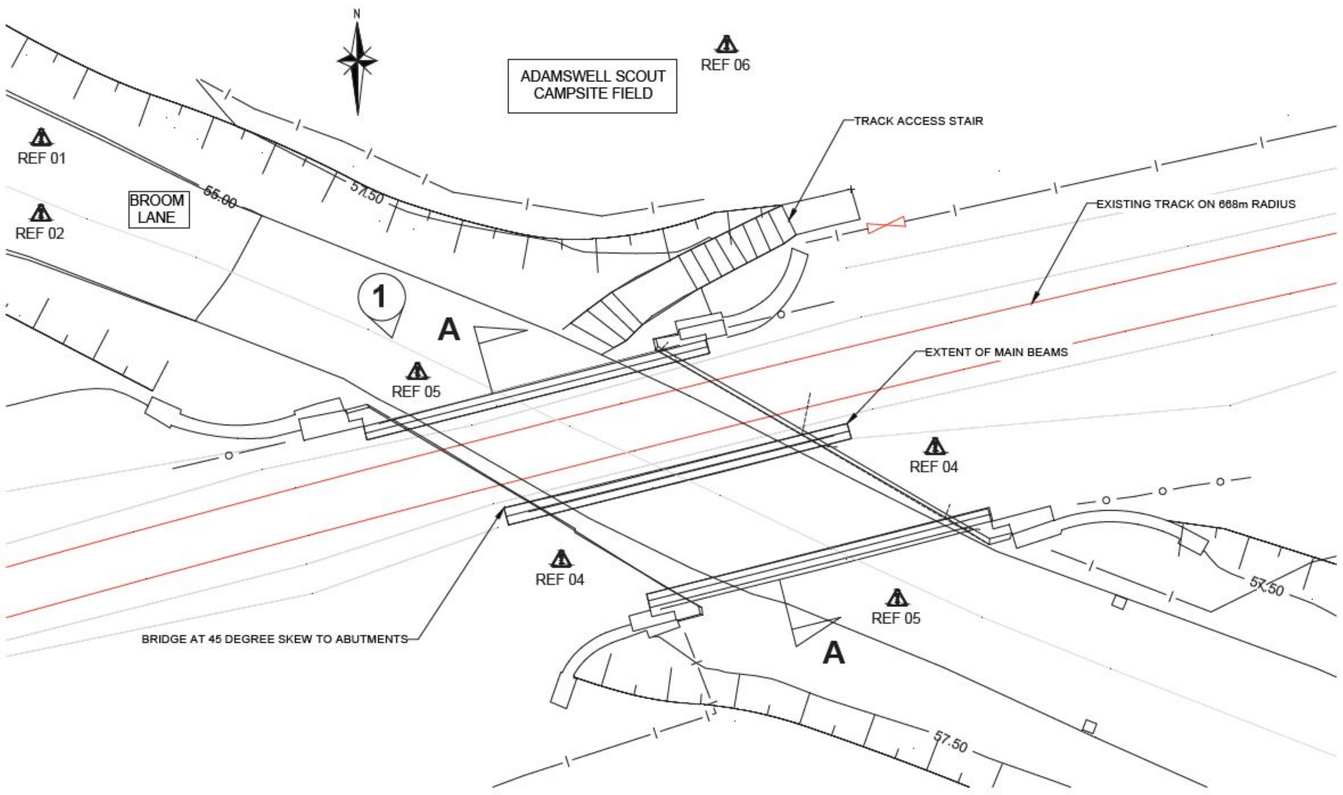
"The SpVR's operating company, the Wealden Railway Company, will be fronting £150,000 from its savings and the Tunbridge Wells & Eridge Railway Preservation Society is adding a further £100,000, which is brilliant, but it will take a huge chunk out of the financial reserves of both parties that might understandably affect future investments," warned Jonnie. "Thanks to generous donations from the public and our supporters, the appeal had raised £100,000 by Christmas, we hope to increase this to £125,000 by the time work begins. However, it still leaves us short of the target by approximately the same amount."

## Threat to the future

To fill this void, the SpVR will work with a private payment plan, but the line must meet the monthly costs associated with this. "While we can put down a lump sum, there will be fixed monthly outgoings," Jonnie explained. "To do this, we must have a steady and stable income, which will come from our events and experiences. After the replacement of Broom Lane Bridge, we must continue to operate and make money; if we don't, the stark reality is that we will cease to exist, albeit with a lovely new bridge in place."

Such a warning comes on the back of a challenging year for the railway. It has brought catering for many of its dining services in-house, resulting in a higher profit margin than when SpVR outsourced it to a third party.˜This move does require sourcing volunteers to fulfil the roles but still, this has so far proven to be a successful business choice, with more than 5500 seats sold on these services, amounting to revenue exceeding £175,000 – and that's before factoring in sales of beverages from the on-board bar. These services will benefit further in coming years with the introduction of a dedicated kitchen carriage. Former Mk. 1 BSK No. 35289, which was acquired from Balfour Beatty in 2016, having been serving as a staff and generator vehicle, is nearing the end of a conversion that will soon see it fitted out with full kitchen facilities to provide for the dining trains.

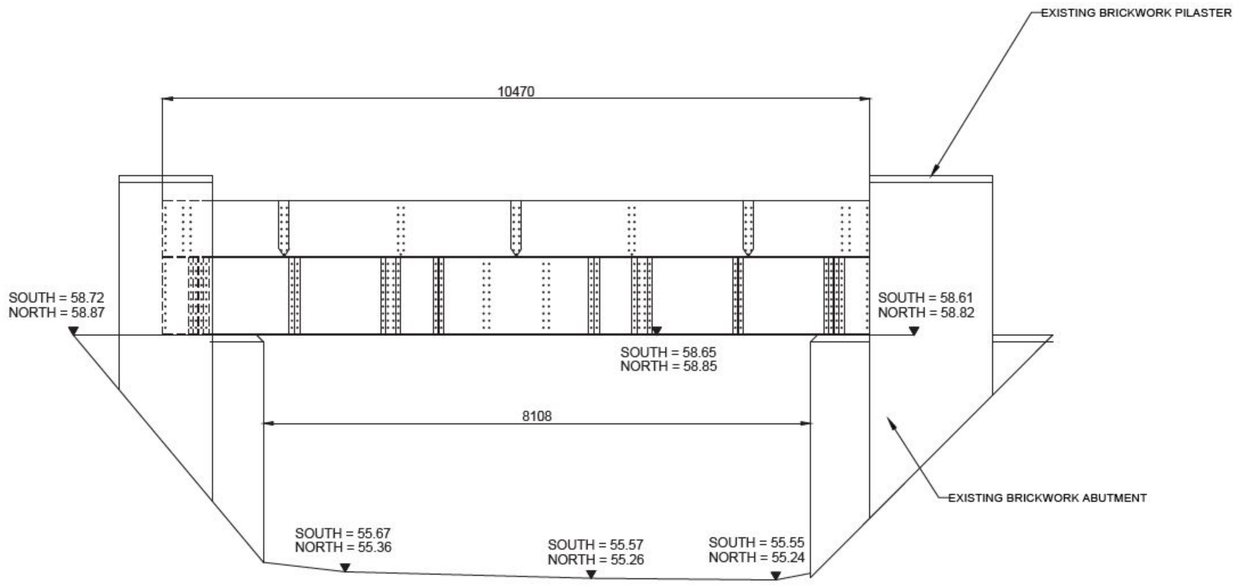
While dining services have fared well, the known challenges facing the sector have



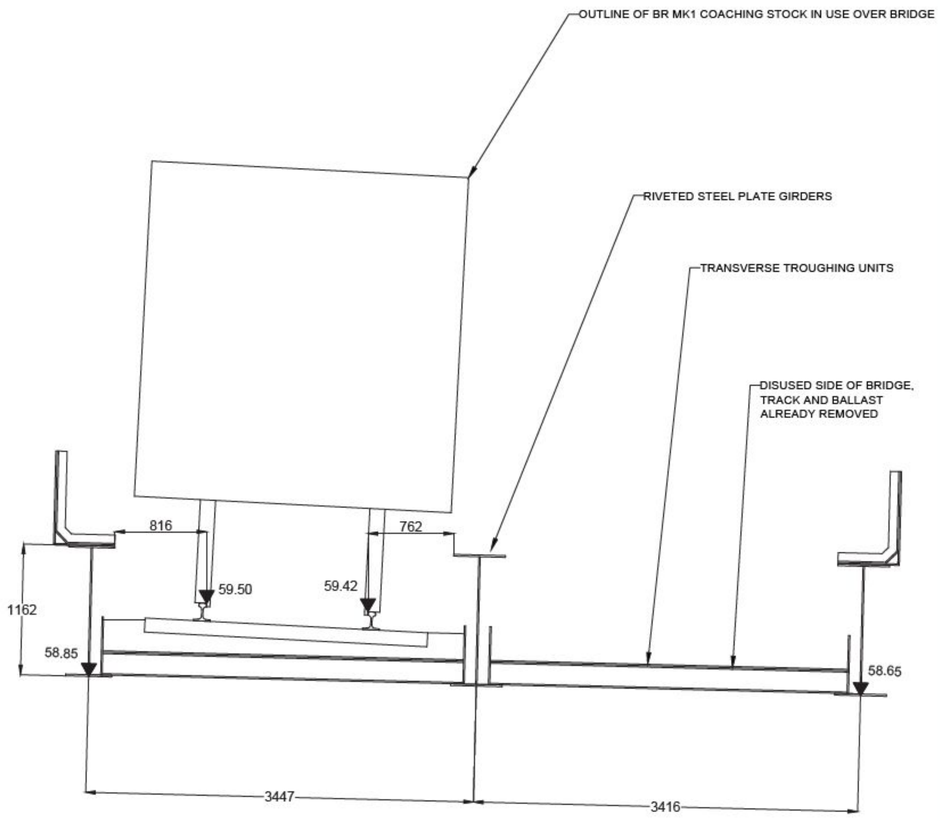

PLAN ON BRIDGE DECK
SCALE 1:100

| No. | HAZARD ⚠ | MITIGATION |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | DAMAGE TO EXISTING MASONRY ARCH BRIDGE TO NORTH ON BROOM LANE | ASSESSMENT RECORDS FOR THIS BRIDGE WILL BE REVIEWED AND IT MAY REQUIRE ASSESSMENT OR OVERBRIDGING FOR ACCESS TO AVOID DAMAGE/FAILURE. |
| 2 | STRIKING OVERHEAD SERVICES OR OVERHANGING VEGETATION | LOW LYING OVERHEAD TELECOMS WIRES AND OVERHANGING VEGETATION HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED ALONG THE ACCESS ROUTE. THE HEIGHT OF VEHICLES WILL BE LIMITED ACCORDINGLY, AND VEGETATION PRUNING MAY BE REQUIRED TO MITIGATE RISK OF STRIKING VEGETATION/OVERHEAD CABLES. |
| 3 | DAMAGE TO BURIED SERVICES | A GAS MAIN HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE ACCESS ROUTE TO THE NORTH OF THE BRIDGE. SERVICE SEARCHES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THERE IS NO IMPACT ON BURIED SERVICES, PARTICULARLY DURING INSTALLATION OF CRANE PADS AND LIFTING OPERATIONS. |
| 4 | FAILURE/INADEQUACY OF EXISTING BALLAST WALL AND ABUTMENT | VISIBLE SECTIONS OF THE ABUTMENT ARE IN GOOD CONDITION CONSIDERING THE AGE OF THE STRUCTURE. A PRECAST CILL BEAM IS TO BE INSTALLED TO MITIGATE THE RISK ASSOCIATED WITH HIDDEN DEFECTS TO THE ABUTMENTS. |
| 5 | VEHICLE COLLISION WITH LOW HEADROOM BRIDGE | BRIDGE DESIGNED FOR IMPACT LOAD AND BEARINGS DETAILED WITH UPLIFT RESTRAINT PINS. |
| 6 | POOR GROUND CONDITIONS LEADING TO CRANE INSTABILITY | GROUND INVESTIGATION IS TO BE UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION TO INFORM CRANE PAD DESIGNS. |
| 7 | INSUFFICIENT WIDTH FOR SAFE CESS WALKWAY OVER BRIDGE | TOPSIDE INSPECTIONS AND MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT UNDER LINE BLOCK. WALKWAY PROPOSED ON SIDE ONLY TO FACILITATE EMERGENCY EGRESS. WALKWAY LOCATED TOWARDS TOP OF MAIN BEAMS TO MITIGATE RISK OF DAMAGE FROM VEHICLE COLLISION GIVEN SUBSTANDARD HEADROOM. |

**An elevation of the planned replacement for Broom Lane bridge, which will not look too much different to the current structure.** SPVR




ELEVATION 1
SCALE 1:50




SECTION A-A
(RIVETS AND STIFFENERS OMITTED FOR CLARITY)
SCALE 1:30

led to a few days of cancelled train services due to a lack of volunteers, while other events have just about washed their face on costs as visitor numbers continue to fluctuate.

Despite this, Jonnie remains optimistic and is already looking ahead to the line's reopening.

"After a break following the Polar Express season, which has once again been a massive success, we will be running trains every weekend from Saturday, January 17 until Sunday, February 22, utilising Caledonian Railway 812 class No. 828, which once again is remaining with us on loan for the foreseeable future.

"After this, the replacement of Broom Lane Bridge will commence in earnest on Monday, February 23, with a six-week completion timeframe – and that is non-negotiable.

"During this period, we will still be open, with experiences and a limited service operating on the accessible part of the line, including a Spring Beer Festival and Model Railway Show.

"We will then reopen the full railway on Friday, April 3 with an Anything Goes event featuring Bulleid Pacific No. 34053 *Sir Keith Park*.

"However, before that, we need as much support as possible to help fund this major infrastructure project. We are grateful for every penny that people can contribute, and we extend our thanks to those who've supported our appeal so far."

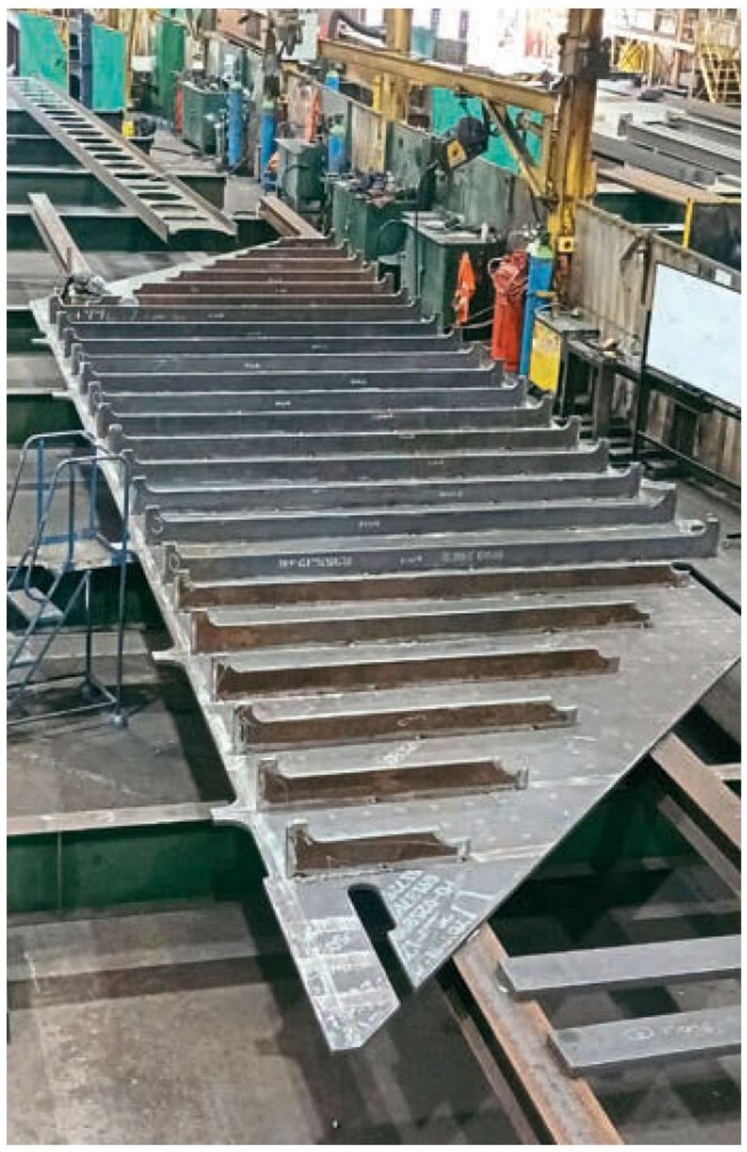
➜ To donate to the Broom Lane bridge appeal, visit **http://www.spvr.link/broomlane**. The SpVR also welcomes bank transfers, which you can make to Tunbridge Wells Eridge Railway using account number 85689874 and sort code 55-70-13, citing Broom Lane in the reference. HR

## STRIDE THE LINE RETURNS

ON March 23, people are encouraged to partake in a sponsored walk of the Spa Valley Railway's track, which will include crossing the replacement bridge. Meeting at Tunbridge Wells West at 9am for a short safety briefing, walkers will then set off at 9.30am, accompanied by railway volunteers who will oversee their safety throughout.

Stride The Line is longer than the last; the route goes to Groombridge station and as far back as High Rocks, for a total distance of about six miles. As trains won't be able to cross the bridge during this event, upon arrival back at High Rocks halt, participants will be taken back to Tunbridge Wells West aboard the line's Class 207 'Thumper' No. 1317.

Places cost £10 per adult and £5 per child, and places can be booked by visiting **spavalleyrailway.co.uk/events/sponsored-walk/**



**In mid-December, fabrication of components for the replacement Broom Lane bridge was well under way ahead of the commencement of installation.** BEAVER BRIDGES

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24th October

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12th and 13th September

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31st October and 1st November

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*Mountain Spirit gets the new season underway!*
*Tickets available on our website*

**APR 25-26** — **THE SNOWDONIAN**
*Our flagship Easter Special Service!*
*Tickets available on our website*

**MAY 16-17** — **MODEL RAILWAY WORKSHOP**
*Family fun at the Porthmadog Ganolfan!*
*10:00 - 16:00 / Children: £2 / Adults: £6*

**JUN 05-06** — **RAIL ALE BEER FESTIVAL**
*Catch the train to Snowdonia Parc Waunfawr!*
*Tickets & info: www.snowdonia-parc.co.uk*

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# Times are tough but plates stay strong




TWO Southern Railway nameplates selling for a combined total of nearly £30,000 at Great Central's auction on December 6 gave a clear message that while times are tough generally, the upper echelon of the railwayana movement is still capable of flexing its muscles and putting on a strong show.

Okay, these two plates were naturals for attracting the spotlight, and alarm bells would have started ringing very loudly if they had not, but they were nevertheless timely reminders that the market retains a buoyancy that some fear had been lost.

Anyway, down to business and the two plates, both of which were from Oliver Bulleid-designed Pacifics, comprised *Yeovil* with town crest and West Country Class scroll from No 34004 that sold for £15,000 and *East Asiatic Company* from Merchant No. 35024, which went under the hammer for £14,500.

Heading the sub-£10k line-up at £8800 was *Merry Hampton* from No. 60066, a Nigel Gresley-designed A3 Pacific whose service life of 39 years was in stark contrast to that of Nos. 34004 (22 years) and 35024 (an even briefer 17 years). The LMS then got involved with *Arethusa* (Jubilee No. 45696), which went to a new home for £6000, and also at the same price the GWR with *Princess Alice* and matching cabside numberplate from Star class No. 4050.

The LNER then re-entered the arena with £4000 for *Loch Quoich* (K2 class No. 61787) and £3500 for *Pallah* from B1 No. 61025, and the GWR with *Tawstock Court* from Saint class No. 2951 (£2500). Three plates failed to sell under the hammer but did so after close of play, this trio comprising *County of Caernarvon* (GWR No. 1010), *Roxburghshire* (LNER D49 No. 62715), and *Sir Edward Fraser* (GCR Class D10 No. 432/ LNER No. 5432/BR No. 62653), going for £4500, £3000, and £2500 respectively.

## Narrow gauge successes

Travelling across the Irish Sea, we find *Letterkenny* from 3ft gauge County Donegal Railways Joint Committee 2-6-4T No. 19 that set sail for £3800, and *Gabriel* from another 3ft gauge locomotive, Schull & Skibbereen Railway 4-4-0T No. 1, which sold for £1800.

The top sellers in two other main line steam locomotive categories were a GWR cabside numberplate from No. 1009 *County of Carmarthen* (£1500) and £1200 for the smokebox numberplate from GWR No. 5999 *Wollaton Hall*, but the worksplate sector was unusually won by industrial steam, in the form of a 1920 Grant Ritchie & Co of Kilmarnock plate (works No. 769) from standard gauge colliery 0-4-0ST No. 43 that was supplied new to Lambton & Hetton of Co Durham (£3400).

Onward now to platform totem signs, whose appeal to collectors shows no obvious signs of abating. The winner, with a realisation of £4600, was BR(M) Dent on the Settle-Carlisle Line which, at 1150 feet above sea level, is England's highest main line station, followed at £3400 by BR(W) Looe, the terminus of the nine-mile branch line from Liskeard, one of whose stations is the delightfully named St Keyne Wishing Well Halt. Third place went to another Western Region totem, Rhayader, on the Mid-Wales route between Moat Lane and Brecon (£3000) which, having closed in December 1962, is the only station of this trio not still in operation.

Southern Railway target signs peaked at £3400 for Barnstaple Junction, a BR(NE) Whitby Station direction sign achieved the same price, and signalling produced a dead-heat at the top when a North Eastern Railway ex-Newcastle Tyer's train describer and a 1907 signalbox diagram from the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen line station of Maesycrugiau each sold for £2600.

Post-steam depot plaques are becoming a minor hit, as illustrated by an Ipswich (pony) example selling for £2400, and looking a little further down the results list, a set of six British Railways cap badges – one for each region and a BR version – caught the eye with a realisation of £1600, as did a Cardiff Bute Docks First World War railway service badge (£1400) and a similar LBSCR badge (£1050). Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).




**Merchant Navy No. 35024 *East Asiatic Company* passes the 90-lever Exeter Central signalbox on June 29, 1957. One of the Pacific's nameplates (insert) sold at a Great Central Railwayana auction on December 6 for £14,500, as reported in this column.** TRANSPORT TREASURY/R C RILEY/GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAYANA



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# Heritage diesels make their mark

ALTHOUGH BR(W) totem Highbridge for Burnham-on-Sea took pride of place in Main Line Railwayana's November 29 live online auction with a realisation of £2800, heritage modern traction enthusiasts were well catered for thanks to a selection of English Electric worksplates from Class 37 (D67xx) Co-Co diesels. The leader of this particular pack, at £2100, was a 1961 example from D6712/37012, which carried the name *Loch Rannoch* for a number of years in the 1980s and in a 42-year career gave service in both England and Scotland.

Support was provided with a price of £1050 by a 1960 plate from D6702/37002 and which, like D6712, started life at the East London depot of Stratford.

Third place in the Class 37 English Electric worksplate line-up, with a price of £900, went to 1962-built D6803/37103, another ex-Stratford resident that carried a name for a few years, in this instance *Stockton Haulage*, and which survives as part of the Harry Needle fleet.

In addition to the Highbridge totem, others within the category included BR(E) pair Mistley and Dovercourt Bay at £900 and £850, and BR(S) Andover Junction that sold for £800, and two headboards that made their mark were 'The Northern Irishman' (£1200) and 'The Caledonian' at £600.







## Railwayana Auction Calendar

- **Ends January 24**
  Great Northern Railwayana ('Alpha'sale)
- **January 17**
  Thirsk Railwayana
- **February 2-27**
  Paddington Tickets

This last realisation was matched by a seatback from the former Colne Valley & Halstead Railway station of Earls Colne, which opened in 1882 and was closed to passengers in January 1962 and to freight in December 1964. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15%.

# LMS doubles up in vintage Onslows' poster auction

THE LMS doubled up in a vintage poster sale held by Onslows on December 5 with first and third place medals, although the LNER also got onto the podium by gaining the runner-up slot.

Gold at £2350 went to a poster by Bryan de Grineau (1883-1957) that was issued by the LMS in 1937 to promote the company's Royal Scot class and the eponymous London-Glasgow express.

Central to the poster was No. 6110 *Grenadier Guardsman* speeding past another WCML express, watched by passengers on the other train. In second place was a Scarborough poster by Austin Cooper (1890-1964), which was issued by the LNER circa 1935 and sold for £710. The third-placed poster, which fetched £510, illustrated a north west England lakeside scene and was commissioned from Freda Marston (1895-1949) by the LMS.

Marston, one of the few female artists to be commissioned by UK railway companies, exhibited at the Royal Academy in London, and examples of her work are held in public collections in Eastbourne and Stoke-on-Trent.

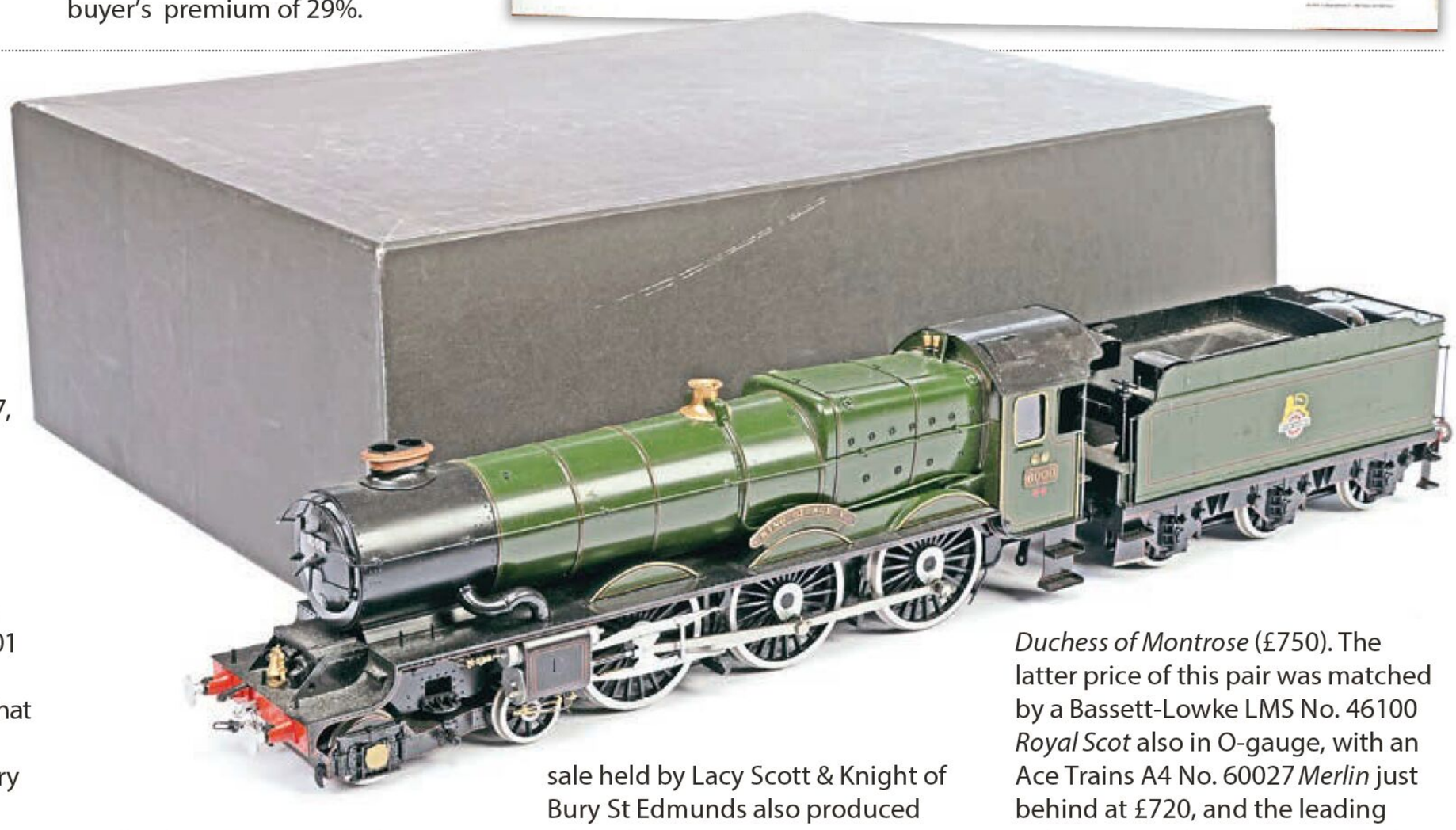
The prices quote exclude buyer's premium of 29%.




# GWR and BR model in head-to-head

A SELECTION of four-figure realisations was among the highlights of a model train sale held by Vectis on November 26/27, with BR leading the way and the GWR in close pursuit. No. 70000 *Britannia* topped the list at £1400 with an O-gauge model made by 55H of York, ahead of another O-gauge locomotive, a Lee Marsh Models of Fife GWR 2-6-2T No. 6101 (£1300), and a Sancheng of China O-gauge No. 6000 *King George V* that went for £1100.

Sancheng made a second entry into the upper reaches of the auction with £850 for a gauge one (45mm) GWR 4-6-0 No. 4983 *Albert Hall*, behind which were two realisations of £540, for a Bassett-Lowke O-gauge No. 6232 *Duchess of Montrose* and a Golden Age of Swanage A4 Pacific No. 60022 *Mallard* in OO-gauge. At this point, live steam made an entrance with a Merlin Locomotives Works G-gauge (45mm) 0-4-0T No. 313 *Proud Angus*, which went for £500.



Two weeks later, on December 12, a railwayana and model trains sale held by Lacy Scott & Knight of Bury St Edmunds also produced a four-figure realisation when an Aster of Japan gauge one live steam 0-4-2T *Thunderbolt* sold for £1050, ahead of an Ace Trains of London O-gauge duo comprising LMS Princess Coronation No. 6235 *City of Birmingham* (£820) and No. 46232 *Duchess of Montrose* (£750). The latter price of this pair was matched by a Bassett-Lowke LMS No. 46100 *Royal Scot* also in O-gauge, with an Ace Trains A4 No. 60027 *Merlin* just behind at £720, and the leading railwayana realisation was £480 for a Metropolitan & Gt Central Rly Jt Ctee vehicle weighbridge restriction enamel notice.

Prices at both the Vectis and LSK auctions exclude buyer's premium of 22½% (+ VAT).

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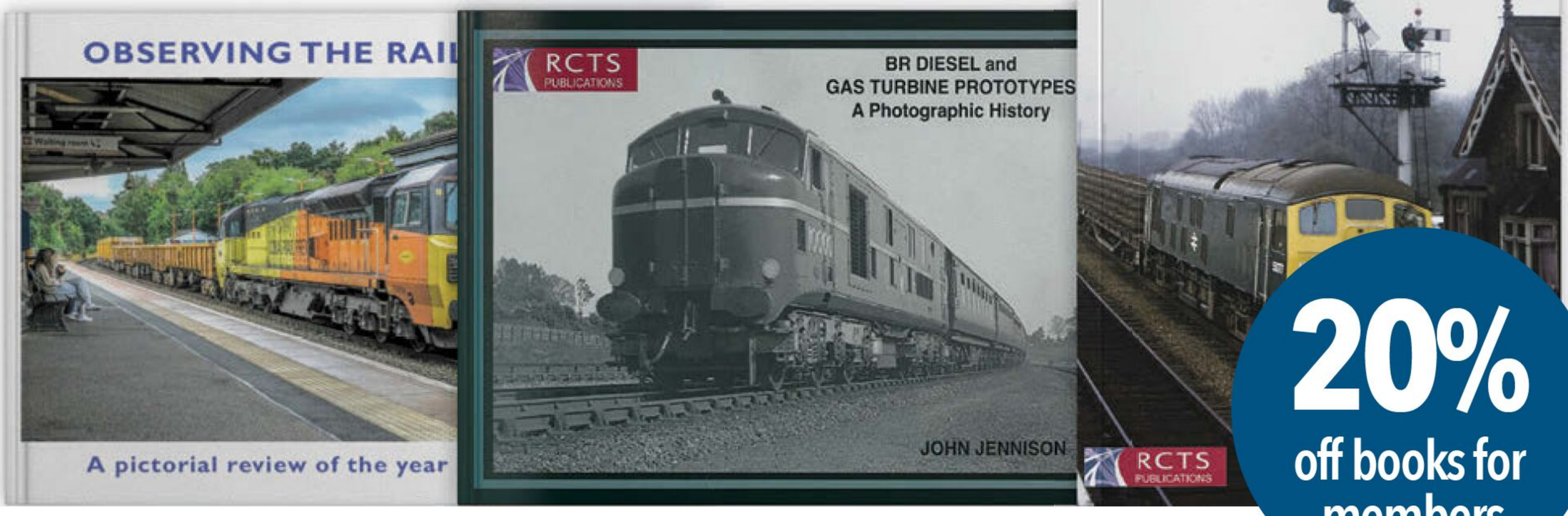
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# THE RISE OF THE DIESEL PHOTO CHARTER

Steam might still be supreme for many, but a current shift in audience demographics has seen those with a nostalgia and passion for diesel traction grow in prominence. **Chris Gee** talks us through the surge in popularity for use of such locomotives in photographic charter circles.

Railway photographic charters are nothing new and have been a feature of the heritage railway scene for a good 35 years. They have their origins in being able to bring an element of control into railway photography to maximise the chances of getting a good shot, particularly if weather conditions are variable. They also offer the opportunity to get photographs of a subject – such as a freight train – or a location you wouldn't normally be able to gain access to during a typical running day or gala.

In the main, steam has dominated the photographic charter market, but the East Midlands Railway Photographic Society (EMRPS), led by Jason Cross, pioneered the diesel photographic charter scene on heritage railways and were particularly active from 2001 to 2022.

I joined my first photographic charters in the early 1990s and many of these were inspirational, particularly those of Bob Branch and Martin Creese or Chris Milner and Robin Stewart-Smith. My particular interest at the time was industrial steam or industrial locations, and they organised some great events that took industrial or BR steam locomotives to rapidly disappearing locations like collieries, docks and steelworks.

In 2023, I decided to pick up the baton; after 45 years in the hobby, the main line railway scene was becoming less interesting, and while we still have a vibrant heritage railway scene, I was keen to do something different to what was on offer on a normal running day or diesel gala.

Like so many others, I wanted to recapture the buzz the hobby gave me in the early years of my interest in railways – and if you want something badly enough, sometimes you have to make it happen yourself. I also wanted to offer something new, to fill a gap in the market.

## Taking a leap

I'm lucky enough to have had a long career in the railway industry. In my penultimate year before retirement, and with the Direct Rail Services Class 37 fleet also reaching retirement age, I arranged my first photo charter, a night shoot of the DRS 'Tractors' in their heritage liveries at the former York Carriage Works, now Network Rail's Holgate base for the railhead treatment train. A charity phot charter on the main line railway was something new, but it drew on that inspiration I got from those early steam charters at such wonderful places as Shelton and Workington steelworks.

I clearly tapped into many like-minded individuals. Through a network of contacts and word-of-mouth, I quickly reached the numbers required for this event to go ahead. After a lot of hard work, planning, and organisation, including cleaning the locomotives, the night was a great success. It gave me a real buzz, both in the run-up to and during the night, and later on seeing the photographic results of those who attended.

As I'd enjoyed it so much, and with retirement approaching, I was keen to do more and have subsequently gone on to organise a series of main line charity photo charters, including two at Drax power station, one at Tarmac's Rylstone Quarry, one at Locomotive Service Group's Crewe

**The first charter I ever ran, with 'Tractor' trio Nos. 37407 *Blackpool Tower*, 37419 and 37425 in heritage liveries at Direct Rail Services' Holgate depot on December 16, 2023.**





**Above: One of the most recent events saw DVLR No. 2 (Class 04 D2245) with a short goods train on the Derwent Valley Light Railway in Murton, near York, on November 1, 2025.**

**Right: A visit to Lakeside & Haverthwaite on November 7, 2025, saw Class 20 No. 20214 paired with a pick-up goods, pictured at Newby Bridge.**

depot, another at GB Railfreight's Tonbridge depot, and also with the LNER Class 91 fleet at Northern's Neville Hill depot, Leeds. The year 2023 was spent very much on main line locations, raising significant funds for charitable causes.

These events don't happen without a lot of railway industry co-operation. Everyone I've worked alongside has been very accommodatingin letting photographers into places they don't normally get access to, as well as helping me realise the vision for the day or night.

I'm also lucky enough to be able to draw on a good network of railway industry enthusiasts who support the events by providing portable lighting or helping with stewarding. We run Northern Diesel Photo Charters (NDPC) – the name under which we operate – as a form of co-operative, with many people helping to make the events successful. In the main, these events have been focussed on getting photographs of locomotive fleets nearing retirement, such as the older BR types which still operate on the main line network as these draw the most interest from photographers. However, I was also keen to follow in the footsteps of EMRPS and run some photo charters at heritage railways.

## Branching out

After the first event at Holgate depot, I followed this up very quickly with a night shoot at the East Lancashire Railway and its Baron Street depot in Bury. I started my interest in this hobby in 1980 and my vision was to recreate an essence of one of those Manchester depots of that era. The ELR operates a fleet of British Rail diesels in BR blue livery, so an opportunity arose to bring those together to create a typical depot scene of the era. Baron Street sheds, being the former Bury electric multiple unit depot and workshops, provided an authentic backdrop for the shoot.

One of the things that railway photographers who attend charters appreciate is authenticity. Creating an authentic scene, excluding modernity, is one of the things that a photo charter can deliver for photographers which isn't always possible on a running day.

Our Bury event took place on a wet night in February 2023. It was thoroughly enjoyable working alongside ELR staff and volunteers and the team who support NDPC to create a vision of a Manchester diesel depot in 1980. This involved shunting locomotives into position – some inside the shed building, some outside in the yard, and others partly poking out of the shed – just as it would be at a normal depot. We removed all modern distractions possible from the scene and provided subtle lighting to illuminate locomotives in the yard or in doorways to present the photographers with a variety of scenes.

Again, I found the planning and organising elements fun, enjoyed working with others on the day to make it happen, and I loved seeing all the results in magazines and on social media. It can be fascinating to see how other photographers capture or interpret what you've presented them with. It was also satisfying to raise funds for the host railway.

While the main line events we run raise funds for wider charitable causes, where the heritage railway is the venue, all the funds we raise go to the railway. These can be good events for the railway, particularly when the ask is a low-cost event in terms of the set-up costs for the railway.

Railway photographic charters normally cost a premium for the participant. This has always been the case because, in the main, the event must be financially viable to make it worthwhile setting up and in particular to cover any costs. That being said, costs for heritage railways are rising, not just for fuel and utilities, but right across their cost bases, and therefore the price of photographic charters has risen too.

Photographers also pay a premium to get the shots they want and to limit the size of the group. These are not open events, and group size is important; smaller groups make for a more comfortable day or night's photography, particularly as some of the locations can be quite tight for space. Limiting the group size means everyone gets a fair and equal opportunity at the best position for some of the shots. Other photographers don't get in the way of these shots, and each individual feels like they are getting a good selection from the session. Where the heritage railway charges a fixed cost for the event, determining the maximum size of the group will determine the price per head for participants.

While some railways charge a fixed cost, other railways are pleased to receive whatever funds you can raise, though generally with an expectation of a minimum amount to make the effort worthwhile. For that reason, photographers pay in advance rather than on the day to ensure that, from an organiser's point of view, the charter can cover these costs or meet the minimum income expectation.

It is the case that rising costs for heritage railways have made some photographic charters unaffordable, with the price per head beyond that which would fill the maximum group size and cover all costs where the railway charges a fixed price.

NDPC operates on a not-for-profit basis, but it is important to cover the price charged by the host heritage railway. My distribution list has grown significantly during the last



**Charters at main line depots have helped raise money for a number of charities and given photographers access to normally inaccessible locations. An InterCity-themed night on October 25, 2024, featured Nos. 89001 *Avocet*, 90001 and 90002 at Locomotive Service Group's Crewe depot.**



**An evening with visiting Class 31 No. 31452 at the Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway on January 31, 2025, caught the interest of diesel photographers. This event saw the locomotive run with an engineer's train, with which it is pictured at Embsay station.**



**No. 33035 and its engineering train at Wensley Scar revived the late BR era on the Wensleydale Railway on October 18.**

two years, but that still doesn't make every heritage railway photo charter idea viable; I've abandoned a few because I haven't been able to muster enough support. Finding the right idea with broad appeal at an affordable price, offering as much value for money as you can, is key.

## Changing audiences

What has surprised me is the broad age range of attendees. Not surprisingly, the generation which grew up with the BR diesel scene in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s forms a good part of the groups, but almost equally there is a much younger generation who are too young to have known that era but have developed an interest in heritage diesels, either through being volunteers or via social media.

We started with a night shoot at Bury because night shoots are popular as they can provide dramatic images, but they also reduce the risks of some of the variables like the weather. When you choose your event many months out, particularly the daytime ones, you're taking a gamble on the weather you'll get. A night shoot, therefore, is a bad weather banker: if you've had dull weather during the day, at least photographers come away with something from the night shoot as we provide lighting to illuminate the scene, and the only weather challenge photographers might then face is rain on the camera lens. It's a long day on a daylight charter when the sun doesn't appear, but when you've managed a few shots in it, you really see the spirits in the group lift.

In 2024, I was keen to do more with the heritage railway sector and we started the year at the Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway with a night shoot with visiting class 31 No. 31452 coupled to an engineer's train. This particular locomotive piqued the interest of photographers and the railway put a lot of effort into putting together an authentic train, loaded with ballast and sleepers, to present a scene that could have come straight out of the early 1990s. Set against the railway's two showpiece stations, the photographers came away with some great results, and we added in some extras such as one of the railway's Class 08 diesel shunters.

We've also helped support others with photographic charters and in 2024, NDPC worked alongside Tom Robson and the Wensleydale Railway to operate two night shoots. The first was in January with the railway's then Anglia-liveried Class 47, No 47714. The second was in October, with the same Class 47 following its repaint into Rail Express Systems' livery, with an authentic engineer's train, and the event also featured BR blue Class 33 No. 33035 in the scenes. Tom did all the organising with the railway, Oliver Turner provided the lighting, and I supported with marketing and selling tickets, along with the running of the event on the night.

Working as a co-operative means we have developed into a strong team, with Oliver and Tom helping out with providing and setting up lighting for night shoots, supported at times by Jasper Schofield-Linnell, Vincent Hardy, Andy Mason and Jonathon Kirby.

For some events I draw on a team of stewards who also act as a sounding board for ideas: regular support comes from Tom Pickles, Gareth Pearson, Danny Young and Matt Fisher, with his partner Beth – Matt being an 'old hand' at organising photo charters on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

In 2024, we went on to organise further night shoots at the Derwent Valley Light Railway in Yorkand at the NYMR's Grosmont depot.

In the same year, I chose to develop two full-day photo charters. One was at the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway with a British Rail blue Class 26 with an authentic goods train of the 1970s and the other took place at the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway with its BR green Class 20 and a goods train for the 1960s.

## Mindful matters

In planning these, despite pessimistic forecasts in the days beforehand, the weather came good for both events.

The great advantage with diesel photo charters is that you can sit the train in the scene and wait for the sun. Steam charters are somewhat different on variable weather days when the organiser sets back the train out of sight and nervously watches the clouds to make a judgement on calling the train forward to get everything just right... a nice exhaust, rods down, sun out!



**The line-up of Nos. 37264, 31128, 47077 *North Star* and 08238 on shed with a steam breakdown crane at Grosmont MPD on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway evoked memories of sights once common at diesel depots across the network.**



**Above: Class 26 No. 26038 with the Far North pick-up goods crosses the River Avon Viaduct on the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway during a charter there on March 9, 2025.**

**Below: There were echoes of Manchester diesel depot days at Bury on the East Lancashire Railway during a night shoot on February 9, 2024. The line-up for this scene comprised Nos. 40135, 40012 *Aureol*, 45108 and 25279.**




Mostly, it works out, but sometimes it doesn't, and with steam you have to go back and try again. With diesels, you can just position the train to sit in the optimum position and wait for the sun to pop out. Even if it's for a fraction of a minute, the photographers still get their desired shot.

The main consideration is to choose locations and times of day where the sun will be on the front of the cab, as backlit scenes are less popular with diesel photographers, though I don't mind them.

There's no returning to depot for coal and water, and as most diesels have two cabs, lots of sun angles can work with the locomotive operating in both directions on the railway, with no requirement to turn the locomotive because of a tender. With both Bo'ness and Lakeside, we added a night shoot as the bad weather banker, but in the event, we came away with some great day and night shoots.

I had the support of seasoned steam charter organisers Andrew Fowler and Peter van Campenhout at both of these railways. Each has experience with the lines and helped by providing a wealth of detail, whether it be contacts, the best place to be at what time of day, or access with permission to private land.

There's much to consider when developing and organising a photo charter. Not every idea has widespread appeal, so it's useful to canvas for expressions of interest at an early stage before developing plans further. Numbers often drop away when plans firm up, so you must be certain that there is enough interest to cover any costs.

You also have to consider the wider costs that participants will bear, including travel and accommodation, and whether the appeal of the charter is sufficient to ensure that people will pay for those. The day of the week and the time of the year (for more sociable night shoot times, or sunrise or sunset opportunities, for example) are also considerations.

Safety is the principal concern, so that means documented risk assessments to identify the risks and the controls and mitigations to put in place. As charters often take place in non-public areas, hazards range from slip, trip and falls to moving trains and contact with electricity. Nighttime and winter shoots further add to the risks, and you also need to consider personal protective equipment requirements – sometimes more than just a hi-vis vest and sturdy boots. You must too consider the accessibility needs of the participants and, as organiser, think about the welfare and wellbeing of those attending and what happens if someone has an accident; having a first aider in the team is key. Wider safety considerations include whether it is appropriate to use drones and if there will be multiple drone operators present.

Next, you must remember that your participants are your customers and are paying for a good experience, so that means clear joining instructions, and clear and concise safety and itinerary briefings at the start of the day and throughout it, as well as making sure that everyone is getting fair and equal access to the best positions. This will necessitate checking that everyone has obtained the shots they want before you move on to the next.

And when it's a long day, both participants and crew will need a break, feeding, and access to loos!

Thought must be given to getting participants to the locations being used, whether it be by train, in cars, or car sharing. For all of these, you need to be aware of how much walking is involved and whether you require permission to access adjacent fields or property. Then you've got to consider how to communicate with the traincrew. You're moving trains to get the optimum shot, so you must be clear on where you are stopping it and if you need to set it back or bring it forward to present the best scene. Radios and knowing your hand signals helps. All in all, there is a lot to do.

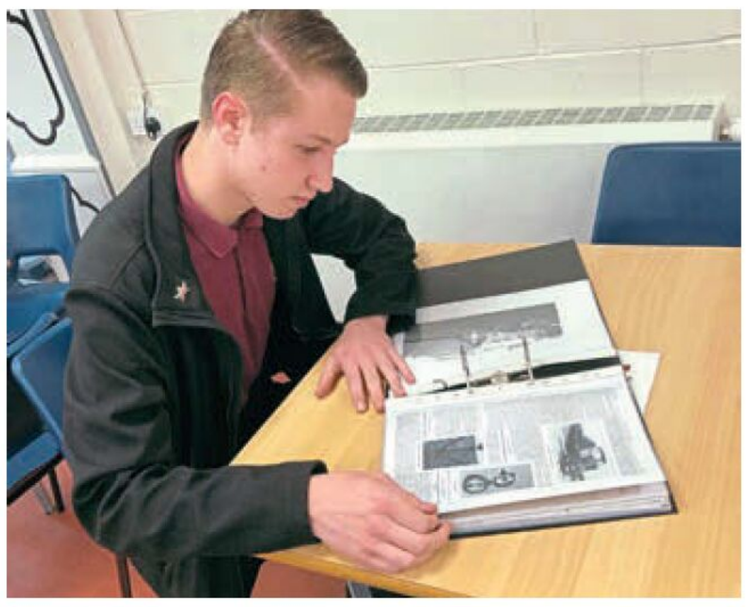
There will definitely be more charters in 2026 on the main line and in the heritage railway sector. As locomotives emerge from overhaul, they always have a value as a subject for a charter. I'm also keen to explore events at railways that have either never run photographic charters or do so rarely. Almost as soon as I've finished one event, I'm on a high thinking about where to develop the next! HR



'Sweet Pea' ready to run brake van rides at the Middleton Railway on August 17, 2025, during its 90th birthday weekend. GEORDIE BROWN

# WHEN GEORDIE BROWN MET 'SWEET PEA'

**Sally Clifford** meets young Middleton Railway volunteer Geordie Brown, who is ensuring that the legacy of his favourite locomotive lives on.



Geordie with the history he has compiled of Hunslet 0-4-0DM No. 1786. SALLY CLIFFORD

IT was visits to his local heritage railway that sparked Geordie Brown's interest in trains. More than a decade later, Geordie is now one of the young volunteers helping to keep that very same railway on track.

"We used to visit various heritage railways around the country, on a weekend and when on holiday, particularly the Middleton Railway. I spent years growing up around trains," said Geordie.

There is no doubt that in later years, when Geordie became a young volunteer at the Middleton, believed to be the world's oldest continuously running railway, it helped pave the way for the railway career he is now pursuing as an engineering apprentice, working on Intercity 225s at Northern Trains' Neville Hill train maintenance depot, just east of Leeds station.

Geordie was 15 years old when he joined the Middleton: "I wanted to get involved helping to maintain the locomotives and I was interested in learning more. I am lucky to be heavily involved with the railways, at Neville Hill depot as my job and volunteering at Middleton in my spare time."

Yet, Geordie still found the time to embark on a very special project to celebrate his favourite locomotive's 90th birthday.

The History of Hunslet No. 1786 *Courage*/'Sweet Pea' & The Courage Brewery Sidings is a special booklet Geordie compiled following two years of painstaking research into the history of the 0-4-0DM officially named *Courage* but universally known as 'Sweet Pea.'

The moniker is said to reference cartoon character Popeye's baby – "because of its size, and the suggestion it would run better on spinach!" smiles Middleton vice-president Ian Smith, who has contributed some of the photographic memorabilia in the booklet, which is available now from the railway and through its website.

"It has been a big part of my life for the past few years – all done in my spare time – and it is the first time there has been a comprehensive history of it," Geordie added.

## In for the running

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 340, No. 1786 is among the four shortlisted entries for the Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards 2026 Diesel and Electric Category. The winners will be announced at a gala dinner in Llandudno on March 7.

During his research, Geordie visited the site of the original *Courage*'s Alton Brewery in Hampshire, and it was by chance that he found details of sign collector John Yeo, who had the original pub sign featuring the little engine hanging on his living room wall. The sign had hung outside The Railway pub in Alton before it closed.

Unaware of the locomotive's history, it was by coincidence that the railway enthusiast had spotted it in the background of a photograph taken at Middleton and contacted the railway. Geordie got in touch with John to see if they could reunite the sign with the locomotive for its 90th birthday. To Geordie's and the railway's delight, John travelled all the way from his home in Somerset to loan it for the occasion.

"It is unique," said John. "I live near Glastonbury, and I was on an industrial estate at the time – I am one of those people who cannot pass a skip without looking in. There was a skip outside one of the units and it was in the skip. I hauled it out because it was a bit quirky."

The stained-glass artist, who has been collecting all manner of signs, including maker plates, since he was seven years old, explained that the artefact is painted in oil on a metal background and is signed 'Steve Sleight 1993.' Geordie said it was repainted that year in preparation for 'Sweet Pea' visiting Alton in 1994.

Keen to see the little locomotive, John was happy to take it to the railway, where he was given a tour by Geordie. "I was intrigued to see it, and Geordie is an amazing guy," he said. "It is almost like drawing the circle together because the loco apparently went to Alton many years ago – it posed outside the



**Geordie Brown on board Hunslet 0-4-0DM No. 1786 *Courage*, nicknamed 'Sweet Pea,' at the Middleton Railway on September 1, 2024, before it was repainted into its original green livery** SALLY CLIFFORD

pub when the sign was still hanging on the pub then."

Geordie said: "It is the first time they have been together since 1994, so it was nice to reunite them."

Since seeing 'Sweet Pea' for the first time during those early visits to the railway in childhood, Geordie has had a soft spot for the engine.

"I much prefer steam but there is one exception," he smiled. "'Sweet Pea' is very different – you cannot look at it and not smile. It is so different from everything else and is really quite an interestingmachine."

It was this interest that prompted Geordie to delve deeper into 'Sweet Pea' before it arrived at Middleton, where the locomotive is more of a museum display piece and certainly pampered compared to its previous working life.

## Brewery shunter

Built in 1935 for the Alton brewery, where it shunted supplies arriving and leaving from the main line until it became surplus to requirements when road haulage provided an alternative form of transport, No. 1786 was instrumental in helping with the maintenance and rebuild of the former colliery line when it arrived at Middleton in 1968 on a Lowmac wagon.

According to Ian, following the locomotive's retirement from its brewery work, Middleton Railway founder Dr Fred Youell, a lecturer at Leeds University, who was also involved with the university's railway society, was instrumental in the line's acquisition of No. 1786.

Ian explained that the engine was one of two small diesel locos – the other now scrapped – and is almost certainly the smallest standard gauge diesel in the country.

"It has character. It has a small 22hp Lister engine, the same engine used in a lot of narrowboats, which chugs along making an almighty noise for a small loco," said Geordie.

The six-and-a-half-ton diesel is largely in its original condition and mainly sits on display in the railway's museum, although it often helps out at events. "It is an old diesel, so you have to treat it with care and respect," Geordie added, and Ian commented: "It's a bit of a pet."

To celebrate its anniversary, and for the first time in several years, 'Sweet Pea' ran brake van rides along the line from Moor Road to Park Halt. "It is good to see it back working better than ever," said Geordie.

Apart from researching the engine's history, the 18-year-old's other important task was to overhaul 'Sweet Pea,' including a repaint into its original livery. "Since it arrived at the Middleton in 1968, it has never worn its original livery. It has been blue, grey, and maroon, but never the original lined green livery it had when delivered to the brewery," Geordie said.

The overhaul was suited to Geordie, who enjoys spending time in the workshop when volunteering. "I tend to be either in the workshop or on the footplate," he said. "Every day is different, and there is always something to do."

Steve Roberts, Middleton's Chief Mechanical Engineer, said: "Geordie is a fantastic asset to the railway. He is keen, enthusiastic, and understands what he is doing. He is very eager to learn and has a natural understanding and aptitude for what is required."

## Sense of pride

Geordie spoke about the sense of pride he feels being part of the dedicated team running this historically important railway, helping preserve the locomotives that clearly hold a special place in his heart.

"There is something about how precisely they are engineered. They are like living characters. I can go on *Sir Berkeley*, and it is different from *Brookes No 1*. It is different from everything else. There is a sense of magic," said Geordie, referring to some of the iconic locomotives in Middleton Railway's rolling stock.

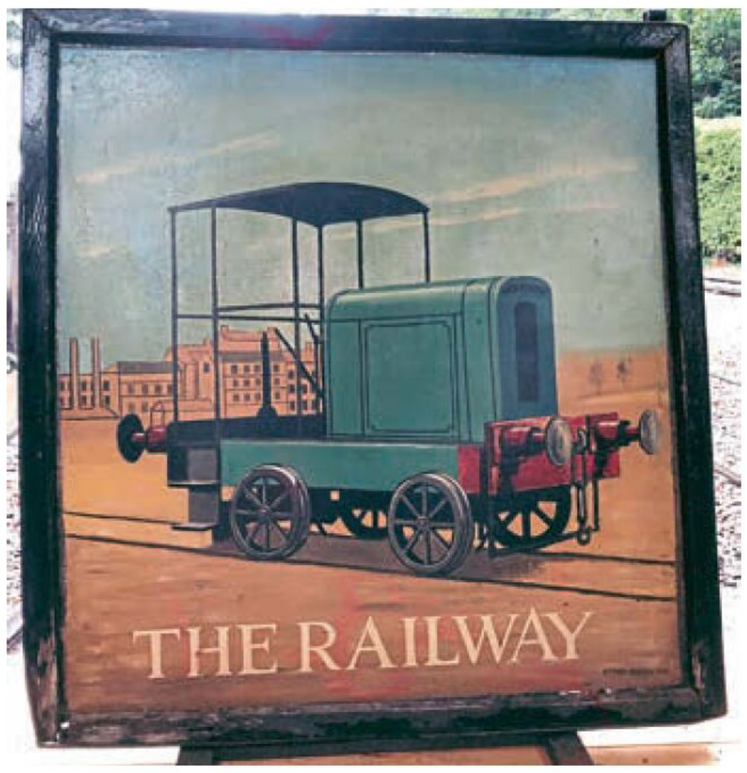
But nothing comes close to 'Sweet Pea.' "It is, in many ways, a memorial to the Alton brewery and it is keeping it for the future," said Geordie, adding: "It has also got historical significance and links to the early days of the Middleton Railway." HR



**'Sweet Pea' during overhaul in the Middleton Railway workshop.** GEORDIE BROWN



**'Sweet Pea' is reunited with the original Courage Brewery pub sign on which it is featured.** GEORDIE BROWN




**The original pub sign featuring 'Sweet Pea' loaned by its owner John Yeo for the 90th birthday celebrations.** SALLY CLIFFORD



**Geordie with Middleton Railway vice-president Ian Smith and *Courage* in its Alton brewery green livery.** GEORDIE BROWN

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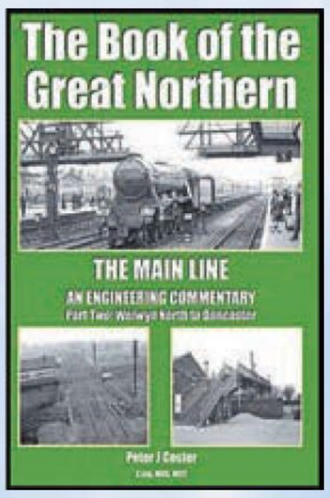


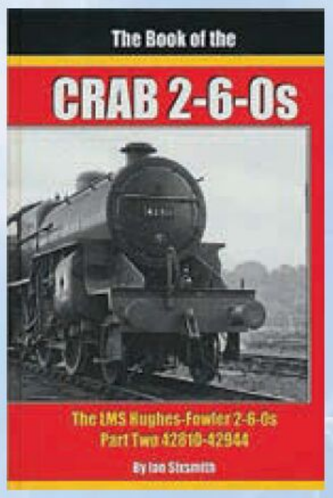
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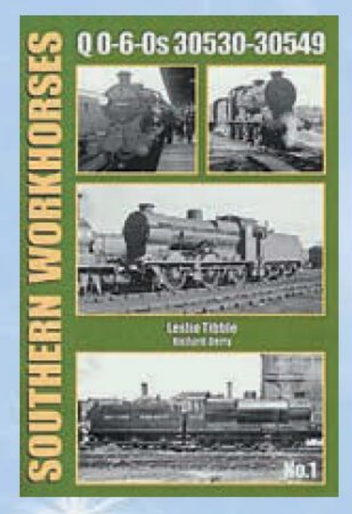
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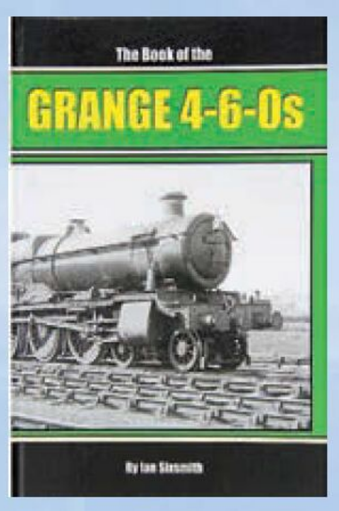


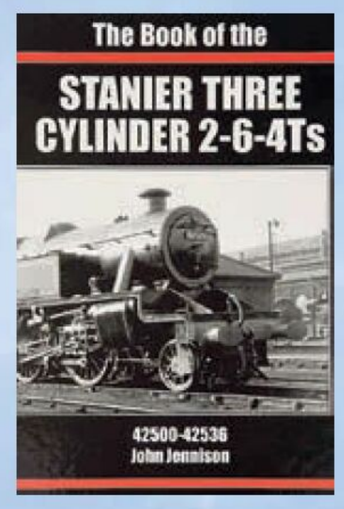



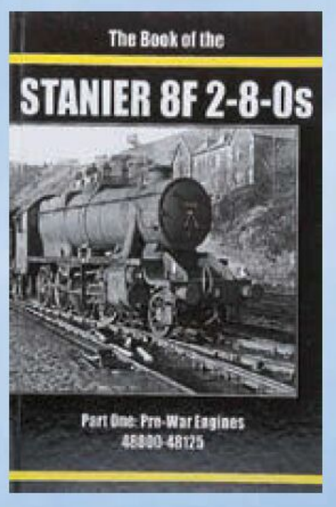


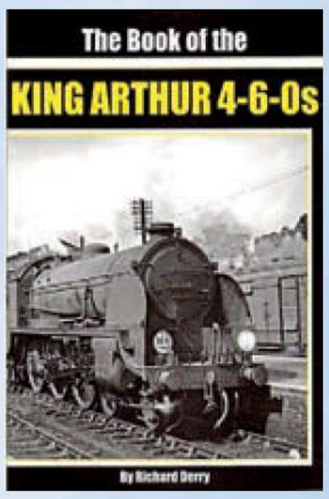


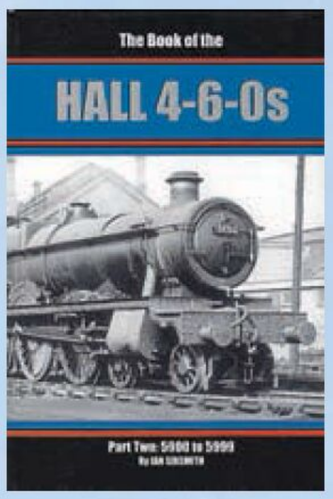


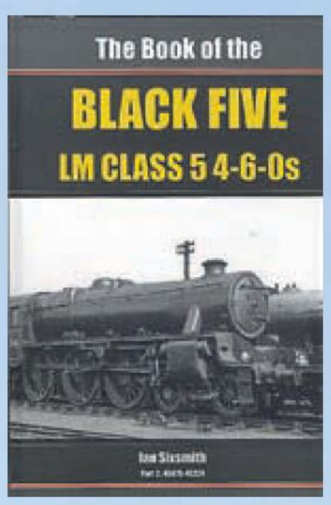



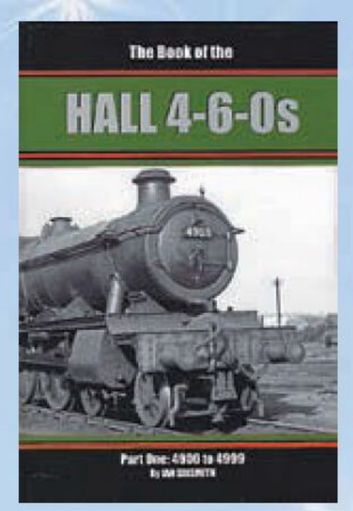



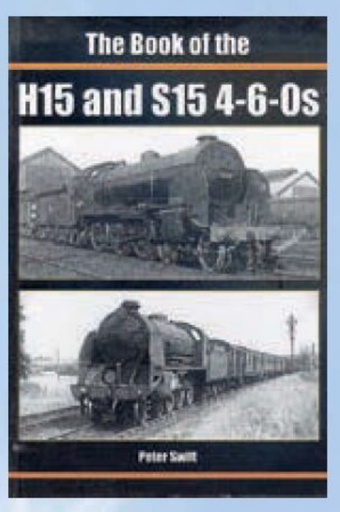



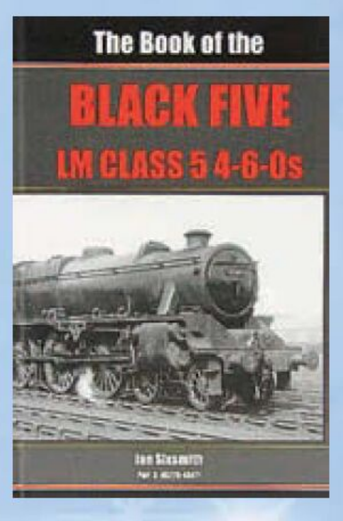



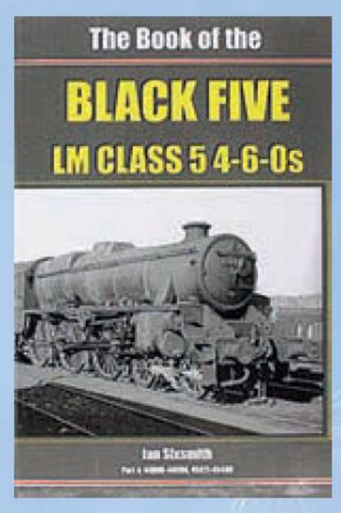



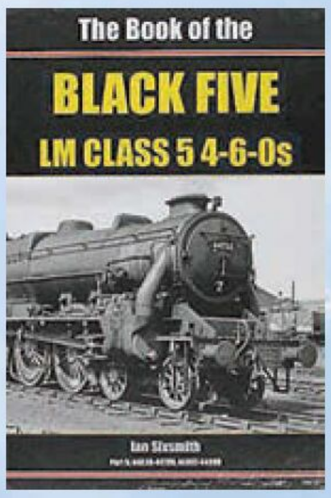



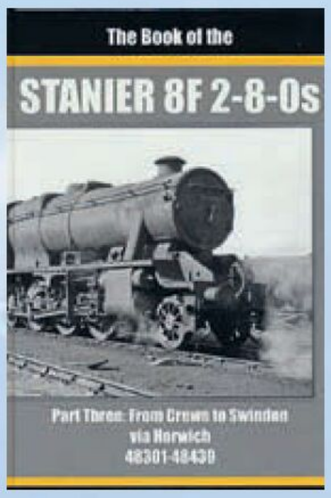



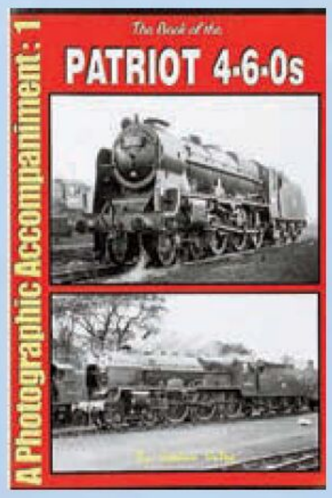



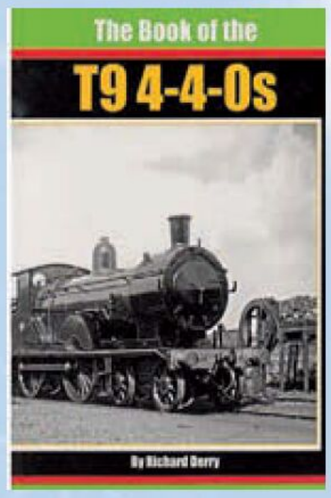



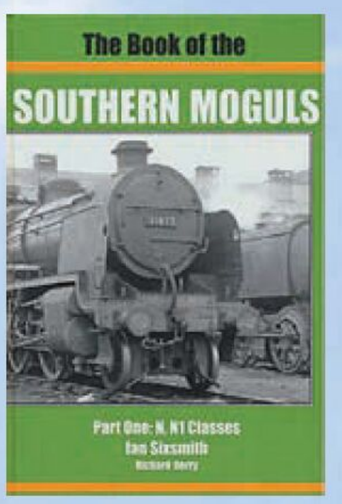



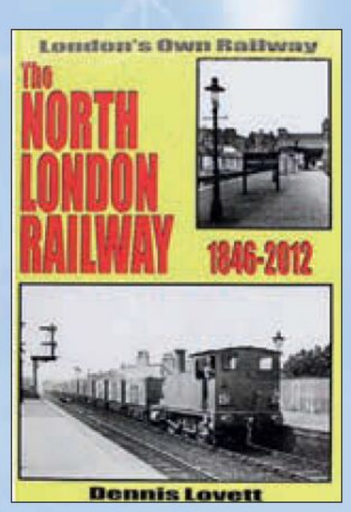



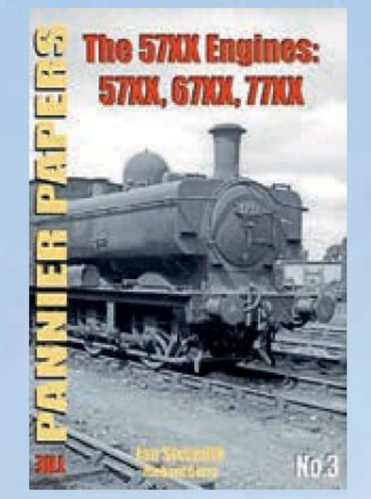



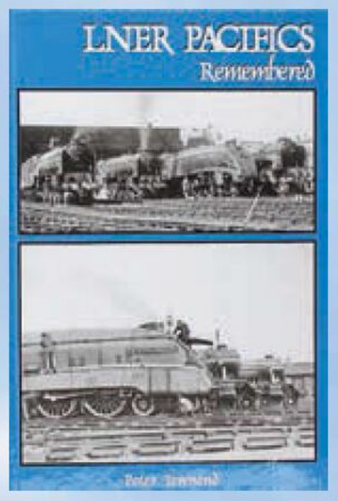



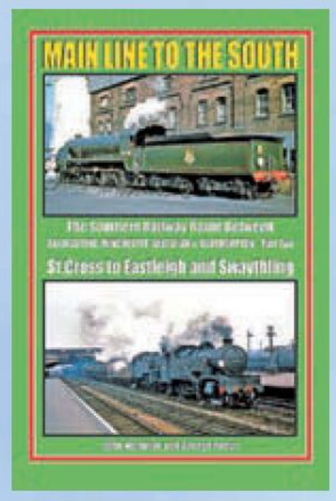



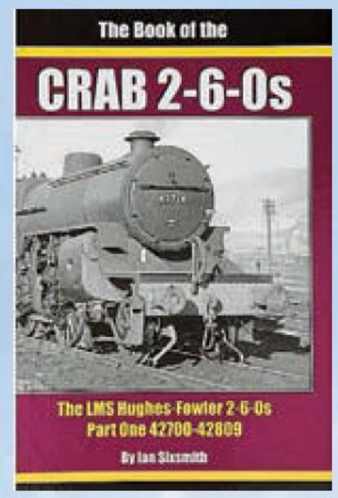



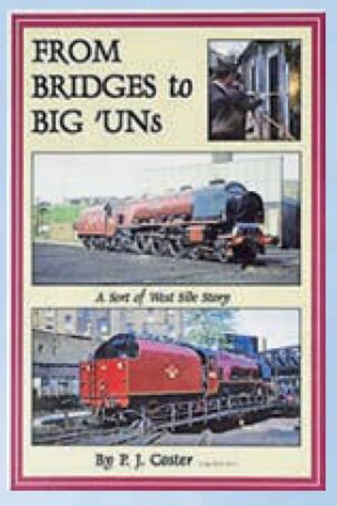



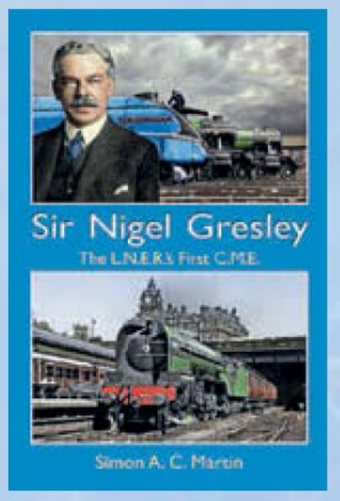



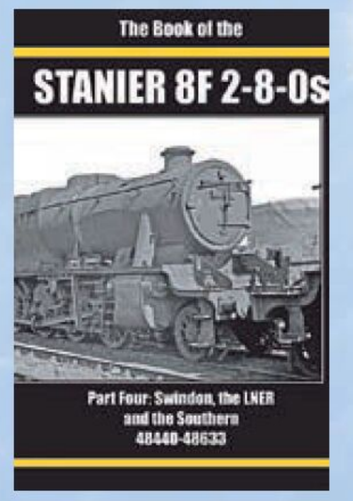



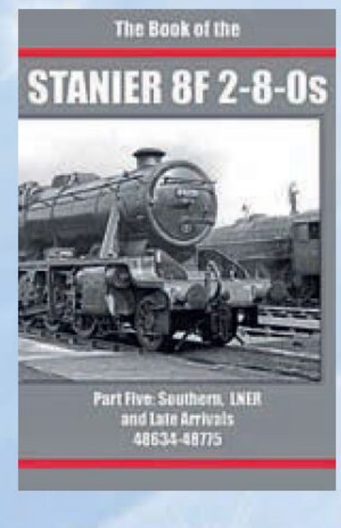



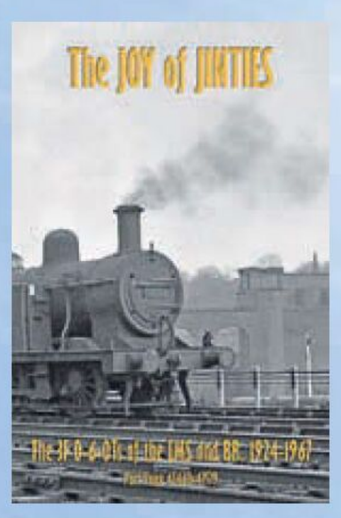



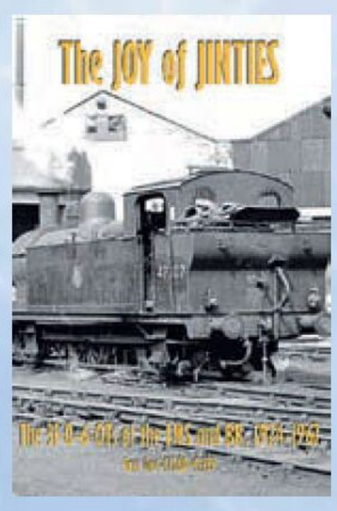



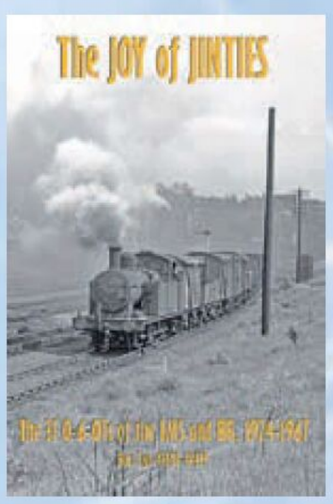







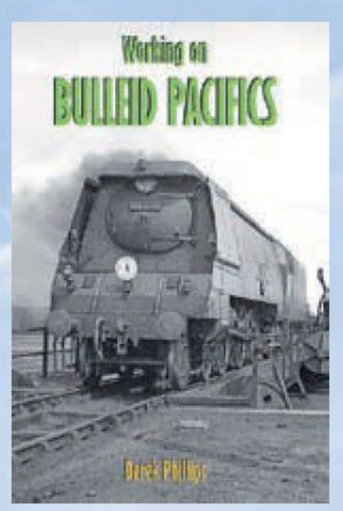


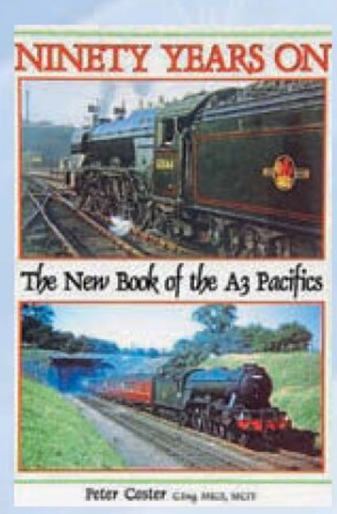











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# Dapol prepares to go 'rockin' the suburbs' with N gauge suburbans



MIDLAND Region modellers working in N gauge received an early Christmas gift when Wrexham-based Dapol announced it was considering scaling down its OO gauge 57ft LMS suburban carriages. The manufacturer has garnered enough support to advance to the tooling phase of its previously proposed Gresley BG and Modified Buffet project in 2mm scale, building on this success by unveiling its second exclusive expressions of interest model range.

The reasoning behind this initiative is straightforward: these are models Dapol is eager to produce but is uncertain whether they will achieve the sales volume needed for a general release.

Before committing to full production, this method enables the manufacturer to gauge the level of interest to determine if it would be a viable product.

From 1933, the LMS started to build carriages to Stanier's Period III designs. As part of this next phase in carriage development, several series of non-corridor coaches were constructed for suburban services. These were built in large numbers between 1933 and 1950, the final examples being withdrawn from revenue-earning service in 1967. Dapol is looking to produce four types of this design: a third, composite, brake third and driving brake third. Should the models go into production, four liveries are being considered: LMS crimson lake, BR crimson, and two versions of BR maroon.

Technical specifications include pinpoint axle pick-ups, sprung close-coupling system, lightbars and interior detailing.

Advanced CADs and artworks have been completed, and so expressions of interest are now being taken.

Updates are being published fortnightly as responses are received, with Dapol set to make a final decision as to whether to proceed further with the project by the end of February.

Should the green light be given, those people who have expressed interest will be offered the opportunity to place a pre-order to secure their models.

For details and to make an expression of interest, visit tinyurl.com/Dapol-LMS-Suburbans




# Dapol shows off decorated 'Footballer' samples




N GAUGE modellers of the Eastern Region were also given a treat in the run-up to Christmas when Dapol revealed decorated samples of its LNER B17 4-6-0s – and confirmed that models should be arriving on doorsteps in the latter half of 2026.

The B17 was a class of 4-6-0 locomotives designed by Sir Nigel Gresley for passenger haulage on the Great Eastern Main Lines, with the first entering service in 1928. In all, 73 were built and continued into service until the early 1960s. There were many amendments and upgrades to the class during its lifetime, including a streamlined version.

Many were named after football teams and so the design was commonly referred to as 'Footballers,' although they were also known as the 'Sandringham' class after the name applied to the first locomotive, No. 4200. Five different running numbers are being produced in this batch of models, which includes Nos. 2854 *Sunderland* (LNER apple green), 1667 *Bradford* (NE wartime black) and 61653 *Huddersfield Town* (BR green with late crest).

The decorated samples received are under review, although some corrections already known to be required include the lining on the tenders of the locomotives.

Pre-orders remain open through the manufacturer's approved stockists, with the RRP starting at £151.20 for DCC-ready models. A train pack which includes No. 61669 *Easterling* and four carmine and cream Gresley carriages will also be available, the RRP for which is £259.20.




# RTC carriages are latest exclusive commission from Bachmann

AS well as the re-run of its LBSCR 'Terriers' from Dapol (see separate story), Rails of Sheffield has also unveiled a OO commission made through Bachmann Europe: a pair of BR Mk. 1 carriages from the Railway Technical Centre train.

Once the backbone of services before gradually displaced by the Mk. 2 design, BR's Mk. 1 carriages were in front line use for half a century and many went on to find other railway uses, ranging from camping vehicles to departmental ones. BR's research division was charged with conducting research into improving various aspects of Britain's railways, particularly reliability and efficiency, including achieving cost reductions and increasing service levels.

Its creation was endorsed by the newly created British Rail Board in 1963 and incorporated personnel and existing resources from all over the country, including the LMS Scientific Research Laboratory. It was primarily based at the purpose-built Railway Technical Centre in Derby, but it also assisted international activities under the trade name Transmark. A number of rail vehicles were converted for RTC's purposes, which included brake testing activities and former BSK No. 35386 (RTC's test car 2) survives on the Great Central Railway.

Rails has commissioned models of two vehicles from the department's collection. Test Car 5 was built as a BSK before conversion in 1972 and saw use as a support vehicle for testing the Advanced Passenger Train (APT) power cars.

Laboratory 12 primarily featured as an acoustics testing vehicle, but it also saw inclusion in the development of the APT in the late 1970s.

Both models are turned out in the RTC's iconic red and blue livery and come with fully detailed interiors, along with many separate detailing parts such as handrails, buffers, and underframe relief.

The price for each vehicle is set at £59.95 and they are scheduled to arrive into stock during the second quarter of 2026.







**Special guests Peter Waterman OBE (left) and Jools Holland officially open Rails of Sheffield's new station shop on November 29, which saw several thousand people pass through the doors that day.** RAILS OF SHEFFIELD

# Waterman opens new store for Rails at Sheffield station

MODELLERS passing through Sheffield will be able to stop off and pick up model railway supplies without having to stray too far following the opening of Rails of Sheffield's new station shop.

Having established itself in 1970 on Chesterfield Road, where it could be found trading from the rear of a grocery store, the subsequent growth of the business sees it today employ more than 60 members of staff, commission a variety of exclusive models (see other stories on these pages), and has now enabled this second store to be opened in the heart of the city, close to the station's taxi rank.

Rails' marketing and content manager, Jack Morgan, said: "Our new location started strong during our grand opening weekend, with thousands of visitors coming through the doors on the Saturday alone. Pop music and model railway legends Pete Waterman OBE and Jools Holland joined the celebrations and to cut the ribbon – and they even treated us to a classic honky tonk tune on the station piano!

"We were delighted to welcome a diverse group of guests, including new and returning customers, members of the national press, and many friends from within the industry.

"On behalf of the entire Rails team, we extend our sincere and heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us and helped make our special day truly memorable!"

The new store is open from 10am-6pm seven days a week (excluding bank holidays).

# All bark, no bite: Rails reveals new 'Terriers' for OO

RETAILER Rails of Sheffield has announced a plan for a new run of LBSCR 'Terriers' in OO scale, which are being produced in partnership with Dapol on the back of a previous series of exclusives of the class first released in 2021.

With both original A1 and rebuilt A1X variants of these 0-6-0Ts included, the tooling has been upgraded since the first releases and now incorporates a number of enhancements, including a new cab with solid roof, etched coal rails, additional weight in the coal bunker space, the fitting of new stay-alive to improve running performance, plus more.

With two types of cab, bunker, smokebox and boiler having been produced, this allows for both mainland and Isle of Wight versions to be replicated, with appropriate wooden or metal brake rigging fitted accordingly. Other features incorporated as standard include a flickering firebox glow effect, diecast wheels with sprung centre driving wheels to give compensation, providing all-wheel electrical pick-up and better traction, and a powerful coreless motor, plus a diecast chassis and running plate for added weight.

Seven new running numbers have been unveiled, including Bluebell Railway-based preserved example No. 55 *Stepney* in its original A1 form.

Also included in this run in the same condition is Kent & East Sussex Railway's *Knowle*, which is to be portrayed in Stroudley's improved engine green livery with its original number of 78.

Meanwhile, Bressingham Steam Gardens' own A1X example *Martello* will be available in BR black as No. 32662, complete with extended Isle of White bunker.




Other examples include No. 69 *Peckham* as Isle of Wight Central Railway No. 10 (in the company's distinctive lined red livery), *Rolvenden* in KESR's lined blue, and B653 in SR olive green.

Prices are set at £139.95 per DCC-ready model, while sound-fitted versions come in at £239.95. Delivery is expected to occur in the third quarter of 2026.






# STRIKING GOLD AT SOUTH DEVON'S NEW YEAR GALA

**Its first gala of 2026 saw the South Devon Railway bag a winning combination of locomotives, weather, and the appearance of a refurbished carriage with an interesting history, as Owen Hayward reports.**



No. 1589 accelerates away from a speed restriction at Nappers Halt on January 2.

A PAIR of industrial locomotives and the launch of a new carriage was a winning combination at the South Devon Railway as its winter steam gala resulted in record revenue for an event of its type.

Taking place on January 2-4, the event rounded off what has been a positive 12 months for the line which, despite seeing a small drop in passenger footfall, has experienced a rise in revenue thanks to the introduction of high-value extras, such as dining experiences aboard recently overhauled Pullman car *Lydia*, and another successful season of Polar Express services in the run-up to Christmas.

The steam gala has established itself as a new fixture in the line's event calendar, making use of GWR 2800 class 2-8-0 No. 2807 which, for the second consecutive year, was hired from the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway to work those festive trains.

Before it returned to the Cotswolds, it joined the SDR's resident GWR duo of small prairie No. 5526 and 0-6-0PT No. 1369 for one final weekend of public running, the event welcoming two popular industrial locomotives which added a splash of colour.



Gala visitors *Judy* and *Newstead* skirt the River Dart at Caddaford as they head towards Buckfastleigh on January 4.




**Winter visitor No. 2807, running with the tender for 2251 class 'Collett Goods' No. 3205, approaches Staverton with a train from Totnes.** ADAM ASHFORD



**Cornish duo *Judy* and No. 1369 double-head autocoach *Kingfisher* through Bishops Bridge loop after departing Staverton.**

## Small but mighty

While industrial locomotives may be commonly associated with shunting duties, there are many which have more than proved their capabilities on service trains. Having spent the winter months beforehand working Santa specials at the Swindon & Cricklade Railway, Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' 0-6-0ST No. 1589 *Newstead* ventured what may be the furthest south it has ever travelled since being built in 1928.

It spent the majority of its working life in Yorkshire collieries, before being saved from scrap in 1972 and given a light restoration at Suffolk Steam.

Following this, it was hidden away in a shed on the grounds of a Hertfordshire convent, leading many to presume it scrapped, until it was rediscovered in 2015 after its previous owner died.

As reported in issue 335, *Newstead* returned to public service for the first time in more than 50 years when its restoration was completed at the North Norfolk Railway in July 2025. Since then, it has visited the Blaenavon, Dean Forest and S&C railways, with its vibrant crimson livery standing out amid the more common greens and blacks.

Joining *Newstead* was No. 2572 *Judy*, a Bagnall 0-4-0ST which was built in 1937 for the Port of Par. Its diminutive stature was necessitated by the low brides around the port, with the locomotive barely 90 inches in height. Such an unusual appearance has seen it and fellow PoP Bagnall No. 3058 *Alfred* gain a popular following, with both locomotives resident at the Bodmin Railway in Cornwall, where the latter is currently undergoing overhaul.

While *Newstead* took it in turns to work full line trips with Nos. 1369, 2807 and 5526, *Judy* worked two trips each day from Buckfastleigh to the line's mid-point station at Staverton hauling autotrailer No. W233W *Kingfisher*.

The return journey saw it double-head with Nos. 1369 and 1589 respectively to assist where required, with the line a predominantly gentle but long climb back.

The Bagnall did most of the work for the return journey, with the second locomotive providing minimal assistance.

## Striking gold

The weekend also saw use of a recently outshopped carriage. Built in 1962 as a brake corridor second, Mk. 1 No. 35327 was rebuilt in 1987 as gold bullion courier van and had remained in the condition ever since. Following its arrival on the SDR in 2021, it has been converted into a carriage fulfilling three purposes, cotaining a guard's compartment, accessible seating space and a buffet, consolidating what once required three different carriages to provide into one.

The carriage entered service on December 26 for the SDR's post-Christmas steam services; although completed internally, its exterior still requires lining out, which is set to be applied during the closure period before running resumes for February half-term.

With temperatures hitting below zero each morning and remaining in single digits throughout the daytime, the provision of a means to obtain warm drinks on board went down a storm with passengers, and many services were packed to standing, particularly on the Friday and Saturday as people sought out a final steam fix before the festive break ended.

General manager Ernest Elsworth-Wilson said: "We had a brilliant weekend on the SDR for our Winter Steam Gala. Aside from some late running, as is to be expected with galas in the middle of winter, it all went extremely well and broke records for revenue. I was driver on *Judy* on Sunday and enjoyed one of the best footplate turns I've had in a long time – an absolute pleasure to drive and really great fun. It even gave No. 1369 a run for its money for my top spot of favourite locomotives!

"It was also really lovely to have a trip with these two Cornish branch locomotives paired up as well.

"I must extend my thanks so much to everyone who helped make it happen and to everyone who came and travelled throughout the three days." HR





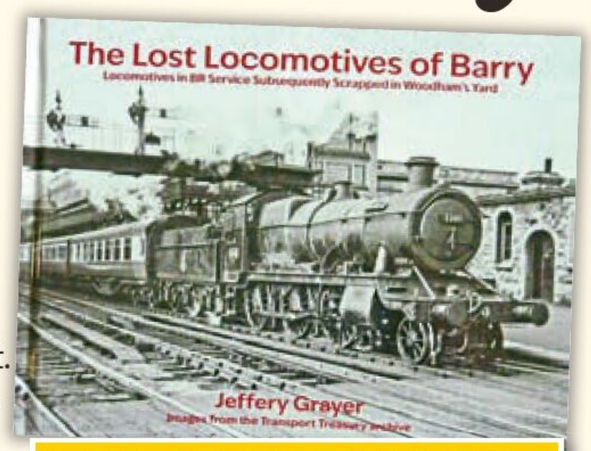

**From carrying gold to earning it: Former gold bullion van No. 35327 is now a carriage offering a guard's compartment, accessible seating space and an on-board buffet.**




**No. 5526 catches the midday sunshine at Dartington as it approaches Totnes Riverside on January 2.** ADAM ASHFORD

# The Lost Locomotives of Barry

**By Jeffery Grayer (hardback, Transport Treasury Publishing, 80pp, £13.50 + £3 p&p, cheques payable to Transport Treasury Publishing and sent to: 16 Highworth Close, High Wycombe HP13 7PJ. ISBN 978-1-913893-72-9).**




**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

ARE you one of those who reads a newspaper from the back to the front? Me too, says **Geoff Courtney**, but not usually with books, which would be a bit daft. However, this new publication was an exception, as I will explain anon.

One of the best-known facts within the world of locomotive preservation is the debt the movement owes to Dai Woodham's yard at Barry, South Wales. More than 200 withdrawn locomotives were rescued from there and so avoided being reduced to scrap, but 75 BR steam engines and four BR diesels weren't so lucky and were cut up by Dai and his crew.

This book features photographs of 68 of that unfortunate group while they were still in pre-Nationalisation or BR service, and so it brings to life a selection of what were indeed 'the lost locomotives of Barry.'

Author Jeffery Grayer writes in his introduction that Woodham's bought 289 steam locomotives between 1959 and 1968, the first being a quintet from Swindon comprising 2-6-2T No. 3170 and 2-6-0 Nos. 5312, 5260, 5392 and 5397. The first to leave the yard for a life in preservation was 0-6-0 Class 4F No. 43924 in 1968 and the last 2-6-2T No. 4553 in 1990, three years after Dai was awarded an MBE for business initiatives that helped create many jobs in the Barry area.

Jeffery has grouped the book's images in the chronological order they entered the yard at Woodham's,the first being the aforementioned No. 5312, which is seen at Worcester in March 1939 and was reduced to scrap in 1959, and the last Type 1 (later Class 15) D8206, which arrived at Barry in April 1969 and went under the cutter's torch in February 1970. The caption to this image reveals the sobering statistic that this Bo-Bo diesel was in service for just 10 years, providing an illustration of the financial implications of BR's headstrong rush to eliminate steam at literally whatever the cost.

Many of the book's initial images are of former GWR locomotives, and these are followed by ex-LMS engine 2-6-2T No. 41303, ironically at the Southern Region station of Cannon Street, and the Southern Railway, with West Country Pacific No. 34045 *Ottery St. Mary* between Oxford and Banbury with a football special in April 1963.

Standard 4MT 2-6-4T No. 80067, the only member of the class to be scrapped at Woodham's, is seen on Willesden shed in April 1959, and D601 *Ark Royal* is seen twice, once at Plymouth North Road station in August 1960 and secondly in rather more forlorn condition awaiting its fate at Woodham's in the mid-1970s with the book's author in the cab.

And so to the back page, which caught my eye to such an extent that I read it first. This comprises a list of every ex-BR steam and diesel locomotive scrapped at Barry, including when they were cut up: 1959 (nine cut up), 1960 (one, No. 4164), 1961 (21), 1962 and 1964 (two in each year), 1965 (36), 1970 (two diesels, D600 *Active* and D8206), one apiece in 1971 and 1973, and 1980 (two steam and two diesels).

It is a thoroughly researched list that records a small but nevertheless important element of the dying days of BR steam, and it certainly makes fascinating reading.

**THE DYING DAYS OF BR STEAM IN THOROUGH DETAIL**

## What Railways Left Behind

**Steve Liptrot (softback, Amberley Publishing, 96pp, £15.99, ISBN 978-1-3981-2515-5).**

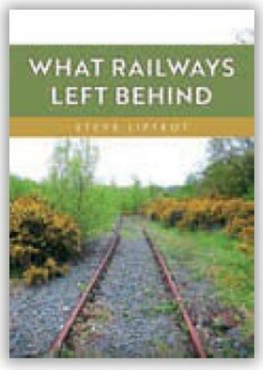
I HAVE no memories of the heyday of rail travel, writes **Owen Hayward**. I was not able to enjoy the sights of a busy London terminus, brimming with a variety of locomotives (steam or diesel) coming and going. Nor could I take in the sound of an LNER, SR, LMS or GWR express locomotive being truly put through its paces. My only impressions of these golden days of travel are in what is left behind: our heritage lines, and the remnants of routes long since closed.

We are incredibly fortunate that as the Beeching axe fell on the network, many of those routes lost were revived for heritage use. While the choice of traction available to many means you can never quite be authentic in what these railways are trying to represent, they are nevertheless invaluable.

There are, of course, a good many routes that have been lost to time. Evidence for a proportion of those has almost entirely been eradicated, while echoes of others can be found in the form of crumbling platforms, converted station buildings, and bridges of various sorts. We are lucky that some of these lost lines have been converted into footpaths and cycleways, meaning they are still accessible.

Buildings, and in some cases even track, are the most obvious clues to where railways once ran, yet if you look closely, sometimes there are other, less obvious hints to be found. Here, author Steve Liprot takes us along a select number of lost lines in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, presenting us with a wealth of evidence that remains in place, ranging from humble anti-trespass signage through to structural recreations.

The latter half of this publication also journeys into Europe, where the author looks at closed lines on the continent. We are fortunate here in Britain that our rail heritage is valued quite highly; I have heard many a comment from international visitors that lament the lack or difficulty of similar efforts in other countries. Yet while our closed lines were often ripped up and stock dispersed, it would appear that a different approach is taken abroad. In Spain, locomotives have been plinthed, while in France and the Czech Republic, rails are left in situ, slowly being reclaimed by nature.




Years after so many lines have been abandoned or incorporated into preserved routes, it is interesting to see just how much evidence of them all remains in place. While I personally cannot remember their days of service, seeing them in situ allows the imagination to run wild with what is, was, or perhaps could have been.

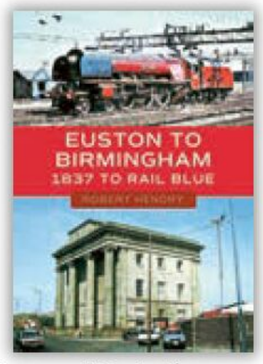
**INSPIRING REMNANTS OF LINES LONG LOST**

## Euston to Birmingham: 1837 to Rail Blue

**By Robert Hendry (softback, Amberley Publishing, 96pp, £15.99, ISBN 978-1-3981-2395-3).**

THE route from London to Birmingham seems to have history at either end of the scales: at the start, it was the first intercity line in Britain to travel between the two cities, while currently it is rife with controversy in relation to the High Speed 2 project and its ever-mounting cost. Between these two extremes, however, the route has changed, been absorbed by different railway companies, and boasted a plethora of traction.

Author Robert Hendry, the respected railway historian and modeller, has amassed quite a collection of photographs and imagery, largely covering the years since the London & Birmingham Railway first opened the route in 1838, ranging from surviving buildings that have found new uses in the modern age to locomotive classes (such as the LNWR 'Cauliflower' 0-6-0), which many may have forgotten ever existed. A particular favourite piece comes from when the line was under LMS ownership in the shape of a Christmas and new year greetings letter from the company's 1934 chairman, Sir Josiah Stamp. It highlights how rail companies back then valued their employees enough to send such a letter directly to them all – a human touch, something our modern society seems to be losing.




Despite the publication's title, there is not much of the BR blue era on show. Photography is largely black-and-white and derived from the late pre-Grouping era through to the early days of BR diesel traction. Locomotive class variations are in plentiful supply, as too are signalboxes (with some accompanying diagrams). Rather than lumping it all in to one or following the more traditional 'passage of time' method of dividing the content up, Hendry has focused on areas of the route at a time, perhaps to make it easier to see



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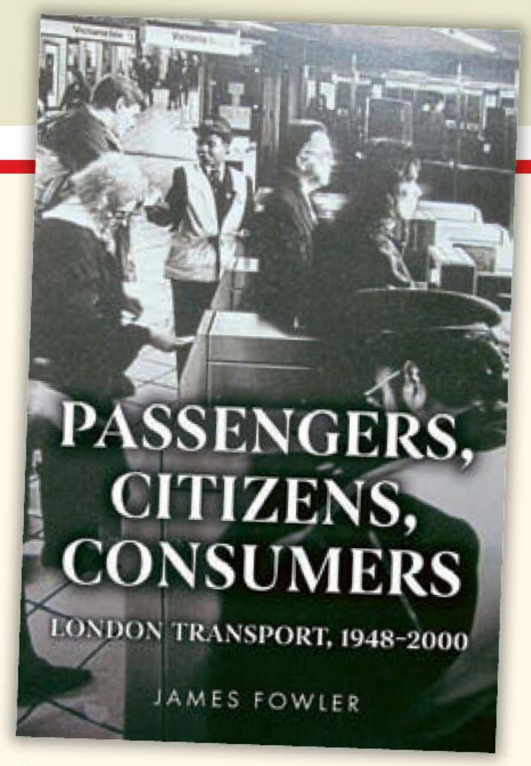

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# Passengers, Citizens, Commuters: London Transport 1948-2000

**James Fowler (softback, Amberley Publishing, 244pp, £19.99, ISBN 978-1-3981-2738-8).**




UNARGUABLY,the driving force behind our railway network is people, writes **Owen Hayward**. Whether that is through addressing commuter needs, industry requirements, and connecting communities, it is people who have driven change in the way the network is shaped, operated and managed as it continues to evolve and adapt to an ever-changing modern world.

This fact obviously stretches right back to (and beyond) the dawn of railway travel: we took horse-drawn carts, laid down rails, and put the two together. Then we took the horses and replaced them with machines of steel and steam, eventually making those bigger and more powerful. As societies and communities changed, so too did our railway in order to adapt to meet their requirements – not just in terms of commercial business, but also in safety and employment standards. All too often do we focus on the locomotives, the engineers, and the routes – yet it was the needs of ordinary people that drove forward much of this development of our rail industry.

Fowler's book here is but a small snapshot taken from the 200-year story, homing in on the world's first underground railway and how people drove change on the London Transport network.

In today's world, we are almost always being encouraged to consider travelling by rail in a bid to ease traffic on Britain's increasingly congested road network (which you might argue is merely shifting the problem from one area to another). That does come with the preconception of helping to line the pockets of bosses and investors through high ticket fares, which seem to be endlessly increasing in cost. This is not a new phenomenon; while immediately post-Second World War, LT's fares went unrevised for a short time as the nation recovered, gradual fare increases were eventually introduced, although these failed to keep pace with costs, something which, as Fowler writes, was "satisfied no one, nor was it intellectually coherent." Interestingly, the nationalised LT was more focused on reducing and controlling existing footfall, despite a "successful socialised transport system" in Glasgow, where fares were half the prices of those in London, potentially holding the keys to addressing this.

The network has grown and evolved further since then; in some ways for the better, others arguably less so. One-man and automated working are now the norm, and we are perhaps now adjusted to seeing fewer members of staff beyond the ticket office (where any of these remain). In the 1960s, when many new practices were first being introduced, Fowler observes that changes seemed to result in an "increasingly capital, rather than labour, intensive system," where reducing frontline staff and merging multiple roles led to disgruntled employees and commuters alike, which would drive yet more change as the issues those brought with them needed addressing further.

This is an incredibly in-depth read and is hard to do it justice in a simple review.

Even if your interest in railways is not particularly deep-rooted, this is certainly worth a look as it helps understand how the modern London Underground has been shaped, much of which can perhaps be extrapolated and applied to the industry beyond.

**HOW PEOPLE DROVE A NETWORK'S CHANGE**

how time has changed each one. With the Stockton & Darlington Railway having taken much of the focus in the Railway 200 year, this shines a light on one of the other historic routes of Britain's ever-changing network.

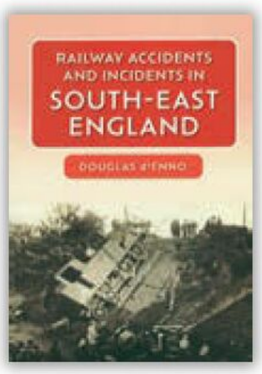
**PASSAGE OF TIME ALONG A RAILWAYFIRST**

## Railway Accidents and Incidents in South East England

**by Douglas d'Enno (softback, Amberley Books, 96pp, £15.99, ISBN 978-1-4456-8119-1).**

DOUGLAS d'Enno has put together a clever and interesting book bringing railway collisions, flood washouts, derailments, wartime attacks and even murder.

The three counties of Sussex (1841-2018), Surrey (1839-2010) and Kent (1846-1994) have between them 90 such incidents and accidents; listed in chronological order, these make for an intriguing read. Some are well-known, such as the Clayton Tunnel accident of August 25, 1861, which is reported as one of the worst in British railways history, and the 1865 Staplehurst bridge derailment,




which had a high loss of life and saw famous traveller Charles Dickens survive to live another five years. He is reported to have been a nervous passenger after his narrow escape.

Light railway pioneer Col Holman F Stephens is mentioned in the Kent chapter, with a map including his Kent lines, while also there are two accidents on his railways included: one in Sussex on the Selsey Tramway's derailment near to Golf Club Halt which happened on September 3, 1923, and also in Kent a crash on the Hawkhurst branch line on February 18, 1948, when a Horsmonden-bound train crashed into the buffers at Gouldhurst station.

A pair of German aircraft being pursued by Polish pilots in Spitfires while they were attacking a train passing near Lydd Town station is an extraordinary wartime account, one of several wartime incidents included.

Many of these reports are supported with wonderful photos from the collections of John Alsop, Philip Barnes and Laurie Marshall, as well as information and pictures from the online Railway Archive and Railway Unions Records, adding an original touch as many of these photos have not been seen before.

Full details of railway locomotives involved, including whether they survived to run another day, are included; also the number of injuries/fatalities, with the names of deceased railway staff mentioned, making this book a poignant – although far from gloomy – read.

**INTRIGUING INSIGHT INTO REGION'S DISASTERS**

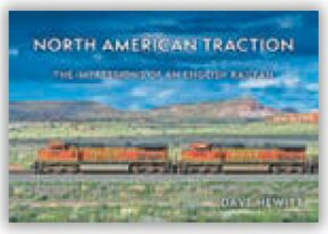
## North American Traction: Impressions of an English Railfan

**Dave Hewitt (softback, Amberley Publishing,128pp, softback, £19.99, ISBN 978-1-3981-2859-0).**

AMERICAN traction can, for some, be like Marmite – you either love it or hate it, whereas I am, at best on the fence, writes **Owen Hayward**. In my opinion, they lack the finesse of British steam and diesel locomotives (at least those up until the end of the BR era anyway). However, while I have grown up with all our rail industry has to offer, the same can be said of rail enthusiasts in the States, whom I am sure would have similar attitudes to our rolling stock.

One thing I can appreciate is a good photograph, and a photographer who tries something different to the standard three-quarters angle shot will always capture my interest, whatever the subject. People often praise the landscape that trains will pass through, but so rarely do we stop to try and capture this in context.

Dave Hewitt has bucked that trend, and this pictorial compilation of his many visits to the United States since 2006 (as well as Canada in 1966) contains a vast array of stunning images which will leave even those with zero interest in American railroads in awe.




From riverside reflections to stunning sunsets, snow-capped mountains dominating the skylines, and vibrant stock contrasting against storm clouds, each shot captures the imagination – and even pushes the mind into considering if and how similar could be achieved here in the UK.

One thing most will be aware of is the length of American freight consists, which are known to stretch on for what seems like forever. The author has many such shots, and you really are left agog at their length – particularly when a shot from a distance still fails to fit the whole train in frame (I gave up counting after the 90th wagon) despite it weaving its way round the curves of a valley.

While, in my own eyes, the aesthetics of American traction leaves much to be desired, its power and the landscape through which their rails travel can be breathtaking. Dave Hewitt does a fine job in capturing that and making us take notice.

**POSTIVE SPOTLIGHT ON AMERICAN RAILROADS** HR

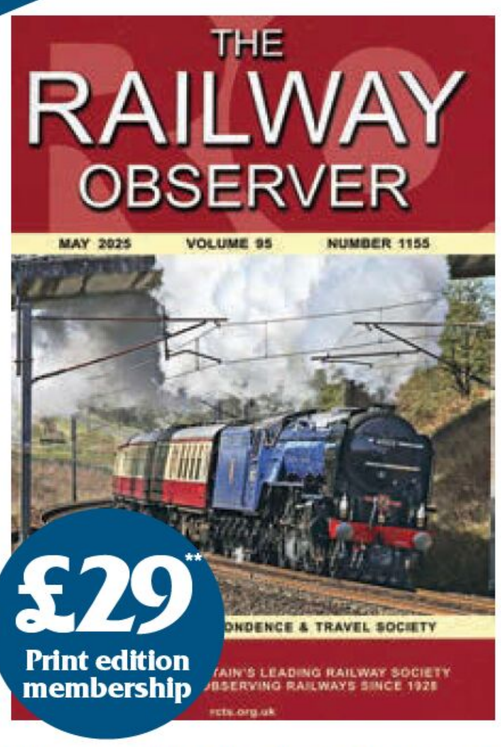


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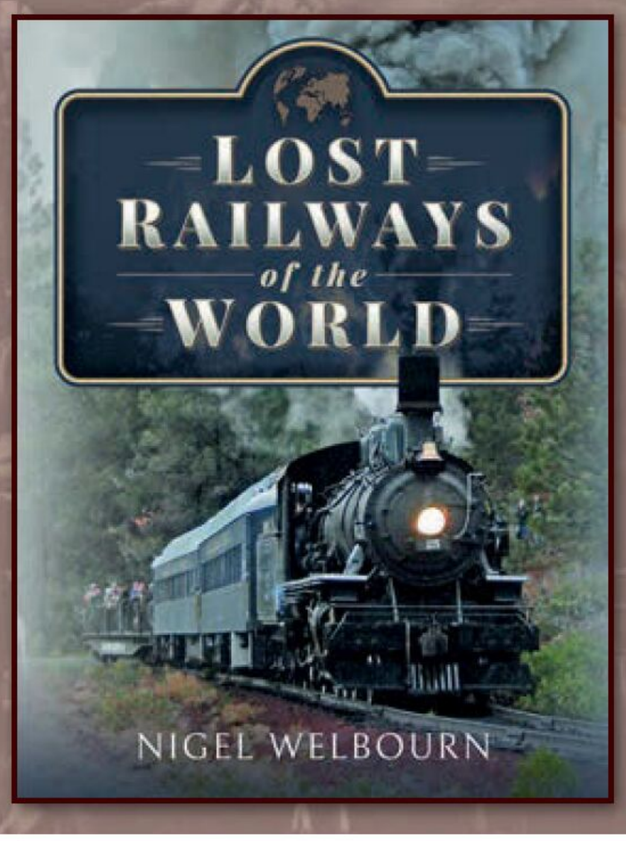
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**Running: Jan 24, Weds from Feb 18.**

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Tel: 07902 446340.
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Tel: 01428 724900.
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Havenstreet, Isle of Wight.
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Tenterden, Kent.
Tel: 01580 765155.
**Running: Feb 14/15, 17, 21/22.**

### Lavender Line
Standard gauge, one mile. Isfield, East Sussex. Tel: 01825 750515.
**Running: Feb 22, Mar 8.**

### Mid-Hants Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Alresford, Hants SO24 9JG.
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**Running: Feb 14-22.**

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**Reopens: Apr 5.**

### Old Kiln Light Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Farnham, Surrey.
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### Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
15in gauge, 13½ miles.
New Romney, Kent. Tel: 01797 362353.
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Standard gauge, five miles.
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
Tel: 01892 300141.
**Running: W/Es.**

### Volk's Electric Railway
2ft 8½in gauge, one mile. Brighton.
**Reopens spring 2026.**

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### Avon Valley Railway
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Bitton, Bristol.
Tel: 0117 932 5538.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Bodmin Railway
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**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Bristol Harbour Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Princes Wharf, Bristol. Tel: 0117 352 6600.
**M Shed Museum open Tues-Suns.**
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### Dartmouth Steam Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Paignton, Devon.
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**Running: sch hols.**

### Devon Railway Centre
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bickleigh, Devon.
Tel: 01884 855671.
**Reopens Apr 5.**

### East Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Cranmore, Somerset.
Tel: 01749 880417.
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### Gartell Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Yenston, Templecombe, Somerset.
Tel: 01963 370752.
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### Helston Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Helston, Cornwall. Tel: 07901 977 597.
**Reopens: Easter.**

### Lappa Valley Railway
7¼in, 10¼ and 15in gauge, one mile.
Newquay, Cornwall.
Tel: 01872 510317.
**Open: W/Es, sch hols + Weds & Thurs from Feb 12.**

### Launceston Steam Railway
1ft 11½in gauge, 2 ½ miles.
Launceston, Cornwall.
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### Lynton & Barnstaple Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Woody Bay, North Devon. Tel: 01598 763487.
**Running: Tues- Thurs, W/Es, bank hols from Apr 3.**

### Moors Valley Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Ringwood, Hants.
Tel: 01425 471415.
**Running: W/Es, sch hols.**

### North Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, 1200ft. Shillingstone, Blandford Forum, Dorset.
Tel:01258 860696.
**Open: Weds, W/Es.**

### Plym Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Marsh Mills, Plymouth. Tel: 01752 345078.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Seaton Tramway
2ft 9in gauge, three miles. Harbour Road, Seaton, Devon. Tel: 01297 20375.
**Running: W/Es & sch hols from Feb 14.**

### Somerset & Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Midsomer Norton station, Silver Street, BA3 2EY. Tel: 01761 411221
**Reopens: Apr 4.**

### South Devon Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Buckfastleigh, Devon. Tel: 01364 644370.
**Running: W/Es & sch hols from Feb 14.**

### Swanage Railway
Standard gauge, six miles.
Swanage, Dorset. Tel: 01929 425800.
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### Swindon & Cricklade Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Blunsdon, Wiltshire.
Tel: 01793 771615.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**



**After completing a successful Polar Express season throughout December, LNER J27 0-6-0 No. 2392 will be staying at the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway until at least Easter. Owned by the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group, it arrived on the line on loan in June 2025.** MIKE HEATH/EBAR



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### West Somerset Railway
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### Yeovil Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¾ mile.
Yeovil Junction station, Somerset.
Tel: 01935 410420.
**Open: Suns. Running: Mar 15, 29.**

## 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.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Colne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Castle Hedingham, Essex. Tel: 01787 461174.
Reopens: spring 2026.

### East Anglian Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Wakes Colne, Essex. Tel: 01206 242524.
**Open: Weds, W/Es.**
**Running: Feb 15, 18.**

### Ferry Meadows Railway
10¼in gauge, ½ mile. Peterborough, Cambs.
Tel: 01733 398 889.
**Running: W/Es, sch hols.**

### Mangapps Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¾ mile.
Near Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex.
Tel: 01621 784898.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Mid-Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 11½ miles. Dereham, Norfolk. Tel: 01362 851723.
**Running: W/Es from Feb 21.**

### Mid-Suffolk Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Brockford, Suffolk. Tel: 01449 766899.
**Running: Apr 5/6.**

### Nene Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 7½ miles. Wansford, Peterborough, Cambs. Tel: 01780 784444.
**Running: W/Es from Feb 14.**

### North Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles. Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8RA. Tel: 01263 820800.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### 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.**
**Running: Feb 15.**

### Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Chinnor, Oxon. Tel: 07979 055366
**Reopens: Mar 15.**

### Cholsey & Wallingford Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Wallingford, Oxon. Tel: 01491 835067
**Running: Mar 30.**

### Didcot Railway Centre
Standard gauge. Didcot, Oxon.
Tel: 01235 817200.
**Open: W/Es + Feb 18-20.**
**Running: Feb 14/15, 18, 21/22.**

### Epping Ongar Railway
Standard gauge, six miles.
Ongar, Essex. Tel: 01277 365200.
**Running: Feb 14/15, 18, 21/22.**

### 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.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Leighton Buzzard Railway
2ft gauge, three miles. Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Tel: 01525 373888
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### London Museum of Water & Steam
2ft gauge, 400 yards. Brentford, London.
Tel: 0208 568 4757.
**Open: Thurs-Suns.**



**On December 11, the NIQTEQ mini mover departed Wansford bound for York, where it will assist the NRM in moving its collection around Central Hall.** NVR

## Mini mover moves onward for new pastures in the north

**In August, the Nene Valley Railway took delivery of a NIQTEQ mini mover which had been donated by Trackwork Limited at Hornsey rail depot in Haringey. Intended to be put to use on small shunting duties, less than four months later it was on the road once more as it set off for the National Railway Museum in York.**

**A product of Netherlands-based engineering firm NIQTEC, the mini mover is one of the E series electric locomotives designed with a capability of moving up to 1200 tons and can be operated remotely.**

**Despite initial hopes of it providing an economical alternative to using a diesel locomotive for small shunting operations, it was ultimately found not to suit the NVR's requirements. However, rather than dump it in a siding and let it decay, it was offered to the NRM, where it will now assist with moving the locomotives on display there.**

**The quirky little contraption joins one of BEAZ Solutions BV's BRR-3000 road/rail shunters already employed there, which arrived in June 2022.**

## MIDLANDS

### Abbey Pumping Station
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Corporation Road, Leicester, LE4 5PX.
Tel: 0116 299 5111.
**Open: Feb 16/17, 22, Mar 30.**

### Amerton Railway
2ft gauge, one mile.Stowe-by-Chartley, Staffs.
Tel: 01889 271337.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Apedale Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Apedale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. Tel: 0845 094 1953.
**Running: W/Es from Mar 28.**

### 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.
**Reopens: Mar 15.**

### Cambrian Heritage Railways
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles (Oswestry), ¾ mile (Llynclys).
Oswestry and Llynclys, Shropshire.
Tel: 01691 728131.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

## Railway museums

### Beamish
County Durham. The Living Museum of the North. Open: Fris-Suns.
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.

### Colonel Stephens Railway Museum
Tenterden, Kent.
Open when KESR trains are running.
Tel: 01732 809143

### 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: April 5.

### 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.
To arrange, contact petergrooke@btinternet.com

### Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
Cultra, Co. Down.
Open: Tues-Suns.
Tel: +44 (0)28 9042 8428.

### Chasewater Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Walsall, West Midlands.
Tel: 01543 452623.
**Open: Daily.**
Reopens: spring 2026.

### Churnet Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Cheddleton, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 360522.
**Running: W/Es from Feb 7.**

### Crich Tramway Village
Standard gauge, one mile.
Crich, Derbyshire.Tel: 01773 854 321
**Open: Sats-Thurs from Mar 14.**

### Dean Forest Railway
Standard gauge, 4½ miles.
Norchard, Lydney, Glos.
Tel: 01594 845840.
**Running: Wds & W/Es from Mar 11.**

### Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, nine miles.
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 823076.
**Reopens: 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: Feb 14/15, 17-22. W/Es from Mar 7**

### Great Central Railway
Standard gauge, eight miles.
Loughborough, Leics LE11 1RW.
Tel: 01509 632323.
www.gcrailway.co.uk
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Great Central Railway (Nottingham)
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Ruddington, Notts. Tel: 0115 940 5705.
**Open: W/Es.**
**Running: May 23/24.**

### 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.
Reopens: spring 2026.

### Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Hunsbury Hill, Northampton.
Tel: 01604 702031.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**



**Visiting German-built W&M railbus No. 79963 will spend June running at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway.** GREG KITEOS/MSLR

## Railbus set for a Middy summer

**The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway will experiment with something new this year when it plays host to Waggon & Maschinenbau four-wheel railbus No. 79963, which is visiting from the East Anglian Railway Museum during June.**

**The original MSLR was exclusively steam powered and thus never saw a diesel locomotive ever haul a revenue-earning train, freight or passenger, in all its 48 years of operation. Had it survived a little longer, then it may well have seen one of these railbuses trialled, as they were on so many branches in East Anglia.**

**"Supposing British Railways had indulged in a little crystal ball gazing and tried out one these 'new fangled' machines already in use in many continental railways – could it have been the saving of the branch?" an MSLR spokesman pondered. "Perhaps not, but visitors will be able to experience for themselves what it's like traveling through Mid-Suffolk on a steam free railbus."**

**Every Sunday in June, the railbus will work passenger services along the recently extended line. The visit will also see No. 79963 come close to its early preservation home, having been preserved in 1967 at the North Norfolk Railway, which sold it to EARM in 2012.**

### Peak Rail
Standard gauge, four miles.
Matlock, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 580381.
**Running: Feb 15, 18, 21/22.**

### Perrygrove Railway
15in gauge. B4228, Coleford, Gloucestershire. Tel: 01594 834991.
**Open: W/Es.**

### Rocks by Rail
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Cottesmore, Rutland. Tel: 07974 171068.
**Reopens: Easter.**

### Rudyard Lake Railway
10¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Leek, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 269948.
**Reopens: 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: Feb 17-29. W/Es from Feb 28.**

### Statfold Country Park
Multiple gauges, one mile. Tamworth, Staffs B79 0BU. Tel: 01827 830389.
**Open: sch hols, W/Es.**

### Tanat Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Nantmawr, Shropshire SY10 9HW. Tel: 01691 780042.
www.tanatvalleyrailway.co.uk
**Open: TBA.**

### Telford Steam Railway
Standard gauge, one mile. Telford, Shropshire.
**Reopens: Easter.**

### 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
**Promenade & depot tours: TBA.**

### Douglas Bay Horse Tramway
3ft gauge, 1 ½ miles. Douglas, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 697473.
**Reopens: Mar 17.**

### East Lancashire Railway
Standard gauge, 12 miles. Bury, Lancs.
Tel: 0333 320 2830.
**Running: W/Es from Jan 24 + Feb 18-20.**

### 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: Easter.**

### Groudle Glen Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 670453.
**Reopen: Easter.**

### 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.
**Reopens: Mar 19.**

### 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.
**Running: Daily from Mar 28.**

### Manx Electric Railway
3ft gauge, 17 miles (MER).
Douglas, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 697473.
**Reopens: Mar 17.**

### Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway
15in gauge, seven miles. Ravenglass, Cumbria. Tel: 01229 717171.
**Reopens: spring 2026**

### Ribble Steam Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Preston, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 728800.
**Running: Feb 14/15, 18, 21.**

### Snaefell Mountain Railway
3ft gauge, 5½ miles (SMR).
Laxey, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 697473.
**Reopens: Mar 28.**

### South Tynedale Railway
2ft gauge, 4¾ miles.
Alston, Cumbria.
Tel: 01434 338212.
**Reopens: spring 2026**

### Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Threlkeld, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 779747.
Reopens Mar 28.

### West Lancashire Light Railway
2ft gauge. Hesketh Bank, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 815881.
**Reopens Mar 28.**

## NORTH EAST

### Aln Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Alnwick, Northumberland. Tel: 0300 030 3311.
**Reopens: spring 2026**

### Appleby Frodingham Railway-Scunthorpe
Standard gauge, 15 miles.
British Steel Steelworks, Scunthorpe.
Tel: 07889 297271.
**Running: Feb 14, Mar 14.**

### Bowes Railway
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles.
Springwell, Tyne & Wear.
Tel: 07850 916484.
**Open: Tues & Thurs to pre-booked groups only.**



**Pre-order Issue 342:** Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

### Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway
15in gauge, two miles.
Cleethorpes, North East Lincolnshire.
Tel: 01472 604657.
**Running: W/Es & sch hols from Feb 14.**

### Derwent Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Murton, near York. Tel: 01904 489966.
**Running: Suns, bank hols from Feb 14.**

### Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Embsay, North Yorks.
Tel: 01756 710614.
**Running: W/Es + Feb 17-20.**

### Heatherslaw Light Railway
15in gauge, two miles. Ford Forge, Northumberland.
Tel: 01890 820244.
**Reopens Mar 30.**

### Keighley & Worth Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Haworth, West Yorks, BD22 8NJ.
Tel: 01535 645214.
**Running: W/Es, sch hols.**

### Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway
2ft gauge. Skegness, Lincs.
Tel: 07407 500884.
**Reopens May 23.**

### Lincolnshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Ludborough, Lincolnshire.
Tel: 01507 363881.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Middleton Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Hunslet, Leeds.
Tel: 0845 680 1758.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### North Yorkshire Moors Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles. Grosmont, North Yorks. Tel: 01751 472508.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Scarborough North Bay Railway
20in gauge, ⅞ mile. Scarborough, North Yorks. Tel: 01723 368791.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Stephenson Steam Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
North Shields.
Tel: 0191 277 7135.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Tanfield Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Near Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.
Tel: 07508 092365.
**Running: Suns from Feb 15.**

### 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.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Whistlestop Valley Railway (Kirklees)
15in gauge, four miles.
Huddersfield, West Yorks.
Tel: 01484 865727.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Yorkshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1,000ft.
Fimber, East Yorkshire.
Tel: 01377 338053.
**Reopens: Apr 5**

## WALES

### Bala Lake Railway
2ft gauge, 4½ miles.
Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01678 540666.
**Running: Feb 14/15, 17-19, 21/22, 28.**

### Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Blaenavon, Torfaen.
Tel: 01495 792263.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Brecon Mountain Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, five miles.
Pant, Mid-Glamorgan.
Tel: 01685 722988.
**Running: Feb 14-22, 26.**

### Corris Railway
2ft 3in gauge, ¾ mile.
Corris, near Machynlleth.
Tel: 01654 761701.
**Reopens: Easter.**

### 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: Daily from Mar 28 + Mar 21, 24, 25.**

### Gwili Railway
Standard gauge, four miles. Bronwydd Arms, Carmarthenshire.
Tel: 01267 238213.
**Running: Weds, Thurs, Suns from Mar 18**

### 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.
**Running: Mar 14.**

### Llangollen Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Llangollen, Denbighshire.
Tel: 01978 860979.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Rhyl Miniature Railway
15in gauge. Rhyl, North Wales.
Tel: 01352 759109.
**Running: W/Es, sch hols.**

### Snowdon Mountain Railway
800mm gauge, 4½ miles. Llanberis, Gwynedd. Tel: 01286 870223.
**Reopens spring 2026.**

**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...

A list of currently published special events. For full details of these services, as well as any additional ones, you are advised to check the websites of the railway or museum you are intending to visit.

### JANUARY
- 22-25 Great Central Railway Winter Steam Gala
- 24/25 East Lancashire Railway Open House Weekend

### FEBRUARY
- 7 East Lancashire Railway Diesel Running Day
- 14-22 Mid-Hants Railway Magic of Locomotion
- 21 Mid-Norfolk Railway Model Railway Day
- 21 Peak Rail The Night Shift
- 21/22 East Lancashire Railway Small Engines Gala
- 28 Great Central Railway Spring Steam Weekend
- 28 Severn Valley Railway Branch Line Weekend

### MARCH
- 1 Great Central Railway Spring Steam Weekend
- 1 Severn Valley Railway Branch Line Weekend
- 7/8 North Dorset Railway 60th Anniversary Weekend
- 14 Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway Start of Season Gala
- 19-22 Keighley & Worth Valley Railway Spring Steam Gala
- 20-22 Bluebell Railway Spring Steam Gala
- 20-22 Spa Valley Railway Spring Ales Festival
- 27-29 Swanage Railway Spring Steam Gala
- 28/29 Dean Forest Railway Small Engines Gala
- 28/29 West Somerset Railway 50th Anniversary Weekend

Organising a gala or other big event? Email the details to Owen Hayward at owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk

### Talyllyn Railway
2ft 3in gauge, 7½ miles.
Tywyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01654 710472.
**Running: Feb 14-20.**

### 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.
**Running: Feb 14-22.**

### Welsh Highland Heritage Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 513402.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Welsh Highland Railway
2ft gauge, 26 miles. Caernarfon, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01766 516000.
**Running: Daily from Mar 28.**

### Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, eight miles. Llanfair Caereinion, Powys. Tel: 01938 810441.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

## SCOTLAND

### Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Bo'ness, West Lothian.
Tel: 01506 825855.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Caledonian Railway
Standard gauge, four miles.
Brechin, Angus. Tel: 01356 622992.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Doon Valley Railway
Standard gauge.
Dunaskin, Ayrshire.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Keith & Dufftown Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Dufftown, Banffshire. Tel: 01340 821181.
**Running: W/Es from Apr 4.**

### Lathalmond Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, Lathalmond, near Dunfermline.
Tel: 07379 914801.
**Reopens: Easter.**

### Leadhills & Wanlockhead Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Leadhills, South Lanarkshire.
**Reopens: Easter..**

### 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.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

## 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.
**Reopens: spring 2026.**

### Railway Preservation Society of Ireland
5ft 3in gauge. Whitehead, Co. Antrim.
Tel: +44 28 9358 6200.
**Museum open: Thurs-Sats.**
**Running: TBA.**

# CLASSIFIED

Contact Andy on 01507 529455 • andy.bruce@kelsey.co.uk
or Connor on 01507 529411 • connor.crowley@kelsey.co.uk

## AUCTIONS




### Railwayana Auctions

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**or email michael@thirskmarket.co.uk**

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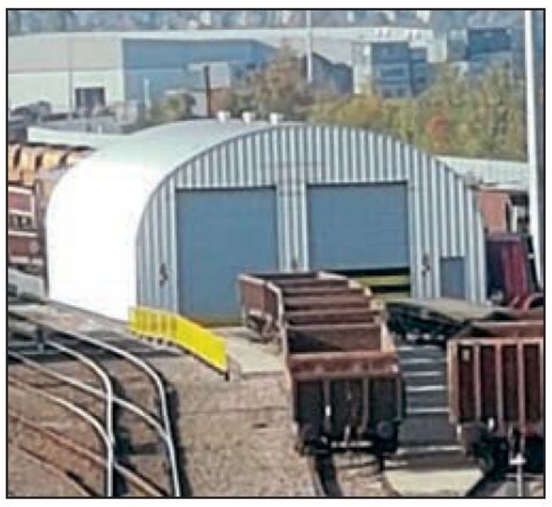
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## EVENTS

**TRANSPORT PAST TIMES**

**NORTH WEST RAIL & TRANSPORT COLLECTORS FAIR**
**Saturday 13th June 2026, 10am-3pm**
**Crewe Alexandra F.C. Gresty Road, CW2 6EB**
*5 minutes walk from Railway Station*
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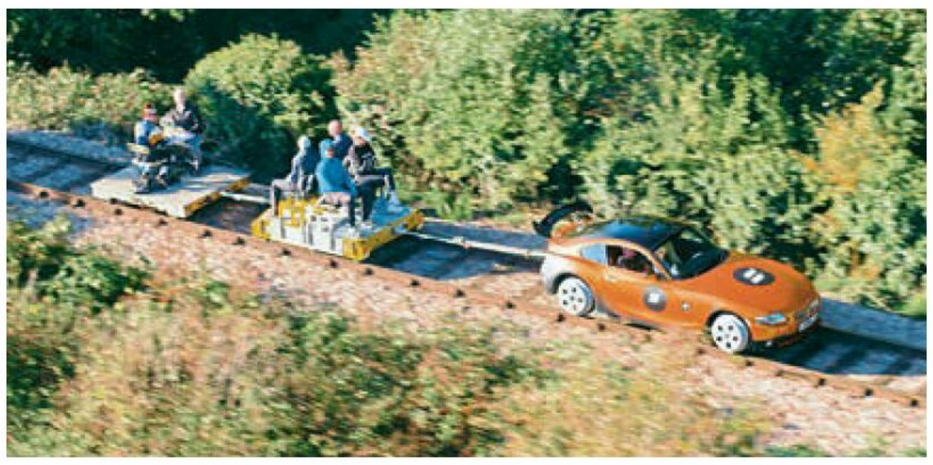
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# WANTED Your lighter takes

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

# A 'wheelie' odd sight in Essex

**By Owen Hayward**



**The modified sports car is put through its paces pulling a pair of converted rail trollies with passengers on board.** AUTOTRADER




**Rory Reid (left) and Peter Ross with the converted BMW Z4 at North Weald on the Epping Ongar Railway during filming last summer.** AUTOTRADER

CAR firm Autotrader may be better known for its new, used, and vehicle leasing services, but it sent a team to the Epping Ongar Railway, where TV personality Rory Reid took to the rails in a modified sports car. With UK motorways becoming increasingly congested and new ones costing upwards of £30 million per mile to build, Reid challenged himself to see how feasible putting an old car onto the tracks would be.

The episode was the first of the web series Wheelie Bad Ideas, in which Reid takes a used BMW Z4 sports car, sourced from Autotrader, and fits it with wheels that are weird, wonderful, and wildly unexpected.

"For this episode, we wanted to push the limits of engineering to create something truly quirky, setting out to revolutionise transport in an effort to beat the traffic," said Rory, who is currently Autotrader's YouTube director. "What better way to do that than use the UK's much-loved railway network?"

If this proposal sounds familiar, you're not mistaken – 14 years ago, BBC's Top Gear visited the Great Central Railway to test out cars which had been given rail wheels as part of a challenge to design a low-cost alternative train, with caravans being chosen as passenger carriages.

Forming part of a series where the ex-Gadget Geeks presenter looks at how different wheels affect the performance of motor vehicles, Reid sought out a car to meet an array of criteria – including being capable of accommodating a variety of different wheel types – with episode one seeing him settle on the BMW Z4, which was then fitted out with rail wheels and taken to Essex for testing.

This actually involved using a spare set of wheels from the Top Gear challenge which were residing in the yard of engineering wizard Peter Ross, who was involved in nearly all of that programme's madcap builds.

Once at the EOR, Reid and Ross put the sports car through its paces, first getting used to how it performs travelling along the six-mile heritage line, hauling passengers aboard modified permanent way trollies before putting the vehicle through its paces with acceleration and braking tests, comparing its performance.

"After months of engineering work and collaboration with the Epping Ongar Railway, we headed to North Weald station to use their iconic line," said Rory. "Steeped in history, it felt like the perfect place to embark on this ambitious project.

"Getting a set of train wheels onto a car wasn't exactly straightforward. With gauge, alignment, spigot and bolt holes differences to take into account, the train wheels needed a lot of adapting – a process that took months. Fortunately, we had the assistance of engineer Peter Ross, whose calculations were spot-on. When we arrived at North Weald, we managed to lower the BMW onto the tracks smoothly without any issues.

"It was a privilege to let loose this amazing feat of engineering on such a legendary railway line, and we really did beat the traffic!"

EOR general manager Nick Arthurton added: "Film and location photography are vital to the income of the EOR, both for the direct revenue generated by the filming work and by association, showcasing our potential to other filmmakers and creative developers, and raising our brand profile widely to customers and stakeholders. It's also great fun!"

To see the full episode, visit tinyurl.com/EOR-train-car

# Barnstaple's bugbear signalbox is a new haven for wildlife

**By Robin Jones**

A NEW signalbox has appeared on Platform 2 at Barnstaple station, the northern terminus of the Tarka Line.

However, the 'box, with its distinctive heritage appearance, is concerned with the interests of wildlife rather than that of controlling trains. Supporting local biodiversity, it is a bug box, providing a welcome home to thousands of insects.

It was commissioned by the Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station after a successful application to the GWR Customer and Community Improvement Fund, and the group worked with the Braunton Men's Shed over six months to build it.

The bug house has a base made of Marland bricks donated from Chelfham station by the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, recycled from the 2000 viaduct restoration, and was unveiled in December in front of civic dignitaries by Barnstaple's mayor, Coun Janet Coates, as the station received an Outstanding award in the It's In Your Neighbourhood category by South West in Bloom.

David Whiteway, the GWR's regional development manager for the west, said "We loved how this project by the Friends of Barnstaple Railway Station exemplifies how strong community partnerships can enhance the passenger experience and celebrate local heritage. Through the dedication of the group and the craftsmanship of Braunton Men's Shed, this installation is not only visually striking – it is also a testament to collaboration and innovation".

Ian Roome, MP for North Devon, said:˜"Littleprojects like this make a big difference in sprucing up the station and supporting local wildlife – it shows the pride people have in our town."




**The Barnstaple station signalbox now teeming with life.** ROB DARK/FOBRS

**NEXT ISSUE**
**Issue 342 out Feb 13**
Dates for the diary: our annual comprehensive list of events taking place at heritage lines and museums around the UK.

**PLUS**
**FROM WATER WAYS TO RAILWAYS**
As the Talyllyn Railway turns 75, we study how saving the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal led Tom Rolt to his involvement with the pioneering line.

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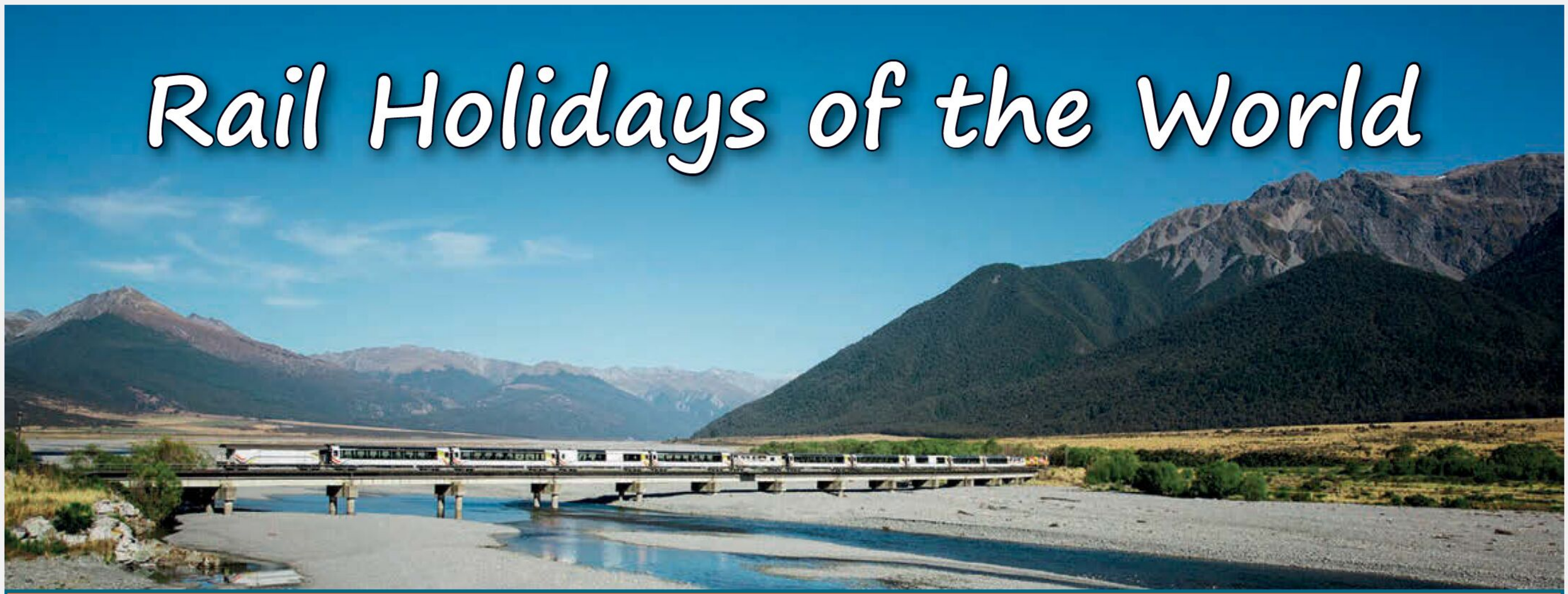
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