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ISSUE 346

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The Talyllyn team: Locomotives that might never have survived (Nos. 1 *Talyllyn*, left, and 2 *Dolgoch*) were it not for the people who had the vision to save them, and those since who have kept them – and numerous others around the world – running for generations to enjoy, as featured on pages 44-49. OWEN HAYWARD

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Railway preservation: powered by people!

TODAY'S heritage sector has long been established as a major component of Britain's tourist economy, with an estimated annual value of £600 million, consisting of 173 working railways, nine tramways, eight cliff railways and 24 museums, and 13 million visitors making 18.6 passenger journeys – and about 4000 employees.

Yet it all began 75 years ago without the benefit of public funding or other major grant aid – just the determined efforts of a group of enthusiasts who were prepared to devote their time and determined graft to saving one narrow-gauge line that linked quarries to the mid-Wales coast.

From those tiny visionary acorns sown nearly four years before the BR Modernisation Plan was published to bring an end to the nation's steam haulage, over the next three-quarters of a century sprang an encyclopaedic list of achievements, firmly setting in stone the principle that railway preservation is the art of the possible – and is entirely due to the people on the ground who made it happen: bringing abandoned trackwork and associated infrastructure back into use, restoring locomotives and rolling stock to make them fit for purpose, training crews to operate debut services, raising the necessary finance via jumble sales, raffles and public appeals, and perhaps most importantly, ensuring that visitors feel welcome.

The success of the Talyllyn pioneers on their learning curve drew up a blueprint of seismic proportions and results, although they would not have known that in back in 1951.

Would Tom Rolt and company have in their wildest dreams foreseen, for example, the day 12 years on when *Flying Scotsman*, the iconic pinnacle of our movement, was sold to Alan Pegler by BR, which had earmarked the A3 for scrapping? Or the construction by the volunteer sector of new full-sized steam locomotives such as A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado*, which now runs on the main line just like its predecessors? The pair combined their superstar quality at the Great Central Railway (Nottingham) in May, hopefully boosting public support for the reunification project which will create one of the finest heritage lines in the world.

Yes, this has been helped by the occasional wealthy benefactor enthusiast and grant aid in more recent times, but what has been accomplished in the main is down to the ordinary men and women who continue to give up their spare time and often travel considerable distances to help out at their chosen heritage railway, making sure it is fit for purpose and staffing station and services. Those railways who have fostered youth groups to ensure their future are to be loudly applauded.

As highlighted in the Railway 200 celebrations of 2025, Britain led the world's steam-powered rail transport revolution, and the immense nationwide legacy left in the wake of the Talyllyn volunteers' example has bestowed us with an unrivalled educational resource for future generations.

Had the Talyllyn volunteer takeover not broken acres of fresh ground and taken off, how much of Britain's rich heritage would have been lost to the scrapman? The country will always owe the Tywyn stalwarts a phenomenal debut of gratitude – and likewise, those who run all of our heritage railways and museums.

Robin Jones Editor

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Happy 75th to the line that started it all
In 1951, a narrow gauge railway in Wales became the first to be entirely run by volunteers; 75 years later and it is still going strong. Owen Hayward attended the Talyllyn Railway's celebrations of not only its own success, but all that followed it.

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CONTENTS: On Saturday May 9, Gresley A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* passes Cockwood Harbour in Devon with Saphos Trains' 'English Riviera Express' from Northampton to Kingswear. The A4 had taken over the train at Taunton as it is currently stabled at Bishops Lydeard to work several of these Kingswear trips throughout the summer, as well as services to Minehead on July 3-5. JOHN LABRUM
COVER: On May 14, the Talyllyn Railway celebrated the 75th anniversary of the departure of its first train from Tywyn Wharf – kick-starting the heritage railway movement. A moment to reflect on the past and look to the future, Young Members' Group chairman Alex Hando and secretary Isobel Coulls prepare to cut the ribbon in a scene reminiscent of that historic moment three-quarters of a century ago. OWEN HAYWARD
INSET: The 1951 photograph of the ribbon-cutting being recreated. TALYLLYN COLLECTION

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Surprise Cotswold comeback for 'Fifteen Guinea' 'Black Five'

After nearly two decades out of the limelight, No. 45110 made its operating comeback at the annual Cotswold Festival of Steam, which took place in heatwave conditions, reports John Titlow.

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Don't look back in Ongar

The Epping Ongar Railway's new general manager, Nick Arthurton, has been learning the ropes of the heritage sector after transferring from a more corporate side of the rail industry. Owen Hayward sat down with him to discuss the plans are for Essex's longest heritage railway.

A Spring Steam Spectacular like no other!

The West Somerset's Railway's May 1-4 steam gala event proved a dazzling success, with 11 locomotives of widely varying types in operation along Britain's longest standard gauge heritage railway, writes Robin Jones.

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Rapido announces another 009 scale project and Ellis Clark shows off OO 'Pug' samples.

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Above: From left with *Blyth* are Steamworks duty stationmaster Richard Stone and locomotive crew Stuart Hart and Chris Williams. SRT

Right: The new No. 3 *Blyth* outside Steamworks on May 25. SRT

First public run for 'nearly-first' heritage line's new-build

By Robin Jones

THE Southwold Railway Trust ran its new-build replica Sharp Stewart 3ft gauge 2-4-0T No. 3 *Blyth* for the first time at its Steamworks site at Blyth Road on the afternoon of bank holiday Monday, May 25 – the first time in 97 years that an original design locomotive built for the Suffolk railway has run at Southwold.

The trust placed £300,000 contract for the full-sized replica of the original *Blyth* with North Bay Railway Engineering Services in Darlington, which it built over three years. As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 292, the new locomotive was delivered to Steamworks on March 29, 2022.

The open event involved *Blyth* running light engine over the current 80-yard section of track at Steamworks. The original No. 3 *Blyth*, works No. 2850 of 1929, worked on the legendary Suffolk line for its full 50 years until the line closed on April 11, 1929.

The railway had been profitable until 1926, but the arrival of buses in Southwold two years later killed it off. Just one week's notice was given before it was closed for good.

Two separate rescue schemes were proposed the following year. The first came from the line's former locomotive foreman, a Mr Belcher, who wanted to convert it standard gauge and extend it to meet the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway.

The second proposal, by businessman Ronald Shepherd, would have seen the line remain 3ft gauge, but using special wagons on which standard gauge wagons could be carried, increasing freight revenue, with petrol railcars for passengers.

Sadly, the schemes divided the community, with the result that there was insufficient support for either, and so what could have become the first heritage railway as we now know it did not happen.

However, what later became recognised as hallmarks of 'typical' preservation schemes, the revival of a redundant railway by members of the general public, had been vocalised for the first time – 21 years before the volunteer takeover of the Talyllyn Railway and the start of today's operational heritage sector, for which the 75th anniversary celebrations are featured on pages 44-49.

The Southwold Railway and its steam engines lay untouched before Mr Shepherd mooted his scheme again in 1941.

He proposed a conversion to 4ft 8½in gauge, with the backing of the town corporation for an application to be made to the Minister of War Transport. However, the track was lifted and the rolling stock scrapped for the war effort.

Trust chairman Bob Mole said: "It was a very good day with more than 150 visitors. *Blyth* performed magnificently, steaming back and forward all afternoon, much to the delight of those standing by taking photographs. *Blyth*'s whistle could be heard a mile away announcing that it was ready for action."

As part of its Heritage Train Project, the trust is now planning to build a shortened version of a four-wheeled carriage which has the look of the original coaches and their distinctive balcony, and which could be run behind *Blyth* on the short demonstration line, as reported in issue 343.

The current demonstration line runs alongside, but not on, part of the eight-mile original railway's trackbed. Future plans include extending it on to the old formation and laying a half-mile track to the River Blyth.

Steam trips are now up and running along Hopetown Darlington's new museum line

THE first public trips on Hopetown Darlington's new standard gauge line took place on May 26.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 345, the line links The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust's new depot to the Bishop Auckland branch, with the trips starting from the 1861 Shed.

The first trips were hauled by Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 2134 of 1942, which became British Gypsum W.T.T, and freshly delivered from West Coast Railway's Carnforth headquarters, its home since the early 1980s, where it has been overhauled.

W.T.T hauled the restored Edwardian-style LSWR third class brake carriage No.1520 on loan from the Bluebell Railway. The 20-minute rides ran every half hour.

Future trips on the line this year will be headed by A1 Pacific No. 60163 and the replica 0-4-0 *Locomotion No. 1*, star of last year's Stockton & Darlington 200 celebrations.

For details of trips on the new line, visit www.hopetowndarlington.co.uk/steamrides

Barclay 0-4-0ST *W.T.T* and LSWR brake third No. 1520 in action on the new museum line at Hopetown Darlington on May 26. JOSH RAPER-PARKER/DBC

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Regulator from world record holder *Mallard* set for auction

EXCLUSIVE

By Geoff Courtney

ONE of the regulators from world record holder *Mallard* – probably second to only *Flying Scotsman* as the most famous steam engine in the world – will go under the hammer at a Great Central Railwayana auction on June 6.

The LNER Doncaster-built locomotive sealed a place in railway history on July 3, 1938, just four months after entering service as No. 4468, when it recorded 126mph with a seven-coach train passing milepost 90¼ between Little Bytham and Essendine stations on the East Coast Main Line south of Grantham, thus beating the record of 124½mph that had been set in Germany two years earlier. One German writer observed after the successful run: "Only the British would name a record-breaking steam locomotive after a duck."

On the footplate of the Pacific, which was withdrawn by BR as No. 60022 in April 1963, were driver Joe Duddington and his 40-year-old fireman Tommy Bray. Duddington, who retired in 1944 and died nine years later aged 76, said after the record-breaking run that he believed up to 130mph could have been possible.

Great Central auctioneer Martin Quartermain, who will put the regulator under the hammer, said: "It is an amazing find in totally original condition with no restoration, and it is like touching one of – if not the – most historic moments in railway history."

As ever in the world of auctioneering, authenticated and believable provenance is paramount, and railwayana, with its coterie of sceptics, is no exception. Great Central will be acutely aware of that fact, as illustrated by Martin when asked by *Heritage Railway* about the regulator's background. "We have had expert verification that the regulator is from an A4, a class that had both left and right regulators that were stamped L or R with the locomotive number, and this regulator is stamped L22," he said.

Mallard was outshopped by Doncaster numbered 4468, renumbered 22 in September 1946, and 60022 by BR in September 1949, which it retained until its withdrawal from King's Cross top shed (34A) in April 1963, when it was saved for preservation to become part of the National Collection.

The regulator has been consigned to Great Central by the widow of a late collector, and estimating the selling price of such a one-off piece of railwayana in today's unpredictable economic environment is difficult, but into four figures may be considered realistic.

➜ See Geoff Courtney's column on pages 72-74 for further details of the auction and more news from the railwayana scene.

Top speed: World speed record holder No. 60022 *Mallard* heads a Down express at Belle Isle shortly after leaving King's Cross on June 17, 1961, while simmering in the background is an A4 classmate, believed to be No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*, complete with a white cab roof, signifying royal locomotive status. A regulator from No. 60022 (see insert) will be going under the hammer in a Great Central Railwayana auction on June 6. TRANSPORT TREASURY/R C RILEY/GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAYANA

King Edward I on main line test run

ON May 6, GWR 4-6-0 No. 6024 *King Edward I* made an unexpected appearance on Locomotive Services Limited's Crewe-Chester test path, catching off-guard many enthusiasts who had been awaiting news of its progress.

Last seen on the main line in 2012, the overhaul of No. 6024 started at the West Somerset Railway that same year, it having been seen in steam on test there in August 2022.

In February the following year, it moved to Crewe for what was initially said to be "an engineering audit by various industry stakeholders and authorised bodies" as part of the assurance process. Since then, however, the locomotive's boiler has been removed and an undisclosed amount of work carried out on it prior to its emergence from the workshops there earlier this year.

Now fitted with slimline cylinders to ensure it is available for as many routes as possible, the testing showed that some further fettling work was required.

Further testing began week commencing May 26, with further testing expected on an undisclosed heritage railway over the summer.

GWR 4-6-0 No. 6024 *King Edward I* passes Beeston during the return portion of the test run from Chester on May 6. TOM PEACOCK

As this issue closed for press, the Deltic Preservation Society announced that D9015 *Tulyar* had successfully undergone not only two light engine test runs along the length of the Great Central Railway on May 26, but also loaded ones hauling nine coaches – the first time it has pulled a train since April 1997! A small number of snagging jobs were identified, with further testing planned during June prior to it finally returning to public services by the summer. DPS

Ian MacCabe, a trustee of the Gresley Society Trust, holds the first of the 20 LNER-style 'Gresley 150 Anniversary' headboards he designed and were being distributed for display on all surviving Gresley locomotives around the world on June 19, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 345. Model versions in 0, 00, TT120 and N gauge scales are now available at gresley.org/shop GRESLEY SOCIETY

Flying Scotsman and *Tornado* pairing a Ruddington sell-out!

By Robin Jones

RECORDS were broken at the Great Central Railway (Nottingham) and its Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre headquarters when A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* and A1 No.60163 *Tornado* ran services there in May.

After many months of planning, the pair arrived double-heading on the main line via Loughborough South Junction on May 15.

The A3 went on display at Ruddington on May 16/17 while *Tornado* hauled trains all eight miles to the limit of GCR(N) operations at Loughborough. Then, on May 23-25, *Flying Scotsman* hauled trains with *Tornado* on display. The A3 was scheduled to work its final trains on May30/31 before departing.

Attendance records were broken, with all seats sold on the six daily nine-coach services.

The first GCR(N) evening train in the heritage era ran on May 2 after a successful application was made to the Department for Transport to vary the Transport and Works Act Order allowing for a 7pm departure from Ruddington – and the trip is a prelude to future evening dining services.

The Nottingham Society of Model and Experimental Engineers ran a tribute to LNER power in miniature form at Ruddington over the bank holiday weekend, and visitors also enjoyed viewing heritage vehicles.

GCR(N) chairman Andy Fillingham said: "This has been a fantastic event for the railway and shows what great teamwork and hard work can achieve. I would like to thank all of our volunteers for their hard work and also the visitors who came to Ruddington and enjoyed a great day out."

"*Flying Scotsman* operated over the Great Central in the 1950s – so we 'brought it home'," said Olly Edwards, managing director of Fox & Edwards Events, which arranged the meeting of the two Pacifics. "The opportunity to compliment the A3 with *Tornado* was very exciting to an Eastern fan like me.

"Ruddington station's end-on platforms has created opportunities to see them side by side six times a day.

"It was very important to us to secure a worthy second locomotive in case of any issues with No. 60103 – not that we expected them.

"This celebration welcomed 12,000 people on seven operating days – four times the railway's passenger numbers for the whole of 2025!

"We have reached more than five million people online, bringing awareness that will power the railway into further success."

During *Flying Scotsman*'s visit, a reunification fundraising dinner took place on May 28. The GCR(N) and GCR are getting close to the target needed to unlock the next part of physical construction to reconnect the pair and in recent weeks have held meetings with stakeholders and politicians to draw together support. The economic impact assessment points to a quarter of a billion pounds of benefit back to the local economy over 30 years.

***Tornado* and *Flying Scotsman* side by side at Ruddington Fields station after arriving on May 15.** JAMES KIRK

Viaduct improvements

The GCR has used the visit by *Flying Scotsman* and *Tornado* to begin a campaign to repair and clean up the landmark 11-arch Stanford Viaduct which carries the line 100ft above the River Soar where Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire meet. Andy Fillingham said: "We had a full survey carried out on the viaduct last year. The good news is that it's fundamentally sound. There are some repairs we want to carry out, the biggest of which is rebuilding a wall that was demolished by vandals."

A programme of works has been drawn up, expected to cost £49,000. If enough money is raised, contractors will be engaged this year and unsightly graffiti will also be cleaned off the abutment walls.

"The visit of *Flying Scotsman* has proved a catalyst," added Andy. "We know the viaduct is a scenic high point of our 20-mile return journey.

"We want it to make it spick and span for passengers and spectators, because it defines the local landscape.

"We also want to make sure it gives good service for the next century. Already, we've raised thousands of pounds towards the work thanks to the incredible interest we've had from the locomotive visiting."

The appeal is being run through the East Midlands Transport Heritage Trust Forward Fund, which encourages people to make small, regular contributions to fund regular maintenance and improvements to the main line.

Donations can be made online at www.emtht.org and clicking on 'Forward Fund.'

➜ ***Tornado* will be returning to the Swanage Railway to take part in the September 11-13 Autumn Steam Gala, when it will be in use across the whole length of the line between Bridge Four at the River Frome and Swanage. It is set to be joined by another visitor.**

***Tornado* pilots *Flying Scotsman* north of Loughborough South Junction after their arrival on the Great Central Railway (Nottingham) on May 15.** JAMES KIRK

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Left: ***Flying Scotsman*** **crossing Stanford Viaduct on the evening of May 23.** MIKE SPENCER

Right: ***Tornado*** **heads a passenger service south towards Rempstone Road on May 17.** ROBIN JONES

Below: ***Flying Scotsman*** **pulls into Rushcliffe Halt on May 23.** JAMES KIRK

The LNER tribute event run by the Nottingham Society of Model and Experimental Engineers at Ruddington. NICK HARRISON

Bullet train partnership between NRM and Japan agreed

By Robin Jones

DELEGATES from the SCMAGLEV and Railway Park in Nagoya, Japan, visited the National Railway Museum in York on May 20 to sign a sister partnership to formalise a mutually beneficial collaboration between the two nationally-recognised railway institutions.

The ceremony took place on the 125th anniversary of the birth of Hideo Shima, inventor of the Japanese bullet train, alongside the popular 1976 0-series Shinkansen displayed in the museum, the only preserved bullet train outside Japan.

NRM director Craig Bentley said: "You cannot write the story of rail without the UK and Japan. The UK, as the birthplace of the modern railway, helped shape the foundations of rail travel around the world, and those early advances were instrumental in Japan's own journey to becoming a global leader in rail innovation. This exciting partnership celebrates not only how far we have come, but how much further we can go – learning from one another, inspiring one another, and continuing to build connections that will shape the future of rail."

The SCMAGLEV and Railway Park in Nagoya, Japan (run by the Central Japan Railway Company, or JR Central) is partly named for the revolutionary Superconducting Magnetically Levitated Vehicle technology (SCMaglev), a magnetic levitation railway system that uses electrodynamic suspension. Developed by JR Central, this technology allows trains to travel at speeds exceeding 311mph, making it one of the fastest rail systems in the world.

Future of rail travel

The L0-series, a prototype SCMaglev vehicle, is currently the fastest train in the world, having reached recorded speeds of 375mph.

Japan is presently developing the Chūō Shinkansen, a line which the L0-series will operate on, allowing passengers to commute from the capital city of Tokyo to Osaka in 67 minutes, the equivalent of being able to travel from London to Edinburgh in just one hour seven minutes (the current average for this journey is five hours and 23 minutes). Hitoshi Okabe, director of the SMAGLEV and Railway Park, said: "This partnership honours a relationship of more than 30 years of trust and collaboration between JR Central and the National Railway Museum.

"Through this partnership, the two museums will engage in exchange as sister institutions, with the aim of passing on the value of railway technology and culture to future generations and sharing it with the world."

The collaboration agreement being formalised next to the Shinkansen bullet train in the National Railway Museum's Great Hall. BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SCIENCE MUSEUM

Marley Hill steam record equals debut spring gala success story

By Owen Hayward

A RECORD 17 steam engines were to be found fired up and shuffling about at Marley Hill on the Tanfield Railway as it held its first-ever spring gala on May 9/10 – although 11 of that number were on the road, not rails.

Having scooped the prestigious Railway of the Year award at the Heritage Railway Association's ceremony in Llandudno in March, as reported in issue 343, the Tanfield line has thrown itself wholeheartedly into its 2026 season, with dining trains, character days and even the news of a £130,000 grant towards a three-year development project aiming at increasing and diversifying its volunteer base all having taken place in a relatively short space of time since then.

However, to kick off its season proper, the railway's spring gala celebrated all of its operational home fleet, accompanied by a line-up of visiting road steam traction.

With six of the railway's steam locomotives in action during the event, Marley Hill played host to the Northern Miniature Road Locomotive Society, members of which brought along an impressive 11 miniature and full-sized traction engines and rollers on display around the event field and railway site each day. With the road and rail figures combined, it is believed that this was the largest concentration of active steam power to have ever been assembled at the Tanfield Railway.

That home fleet included 0-6-0T No. 3 *Twizel*, the oldest railway locomotive on the roster, which dates back to 1891 and was built by Robert Stephenson & Company. It was joined by 0-4-0ST No. 7409 *Sir Cecil A Cochrane* and 0-6-0ST No. 7098 (NCB No. 49), both products of Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn works dating from 1948 and 1943 respectively, along with Andrew Barclay pair 0-6-0ST No. 1015 *Horden* of 1904 and 0-4-0ST No. 1659 *Stanley* of 1920. Rounding off the steam line-up was Hawthorn Leslie 0-4-0ST works No. 2859 (*Keighley Corporation Gas Dept. No. 2*), which entered service in 1911.

The weekend was about more than just the steam, however, with three early-era diesel locomotives also plying their trade. The oldest of these was 0-4-0DE No. 2, which was built in 1933 by Sir G Armstrong, Whitworth & Co, for A Reyrolle & Co Ltd for use in the firm's Hebburn and New Town works in Country Durham, with the locomotive given running rights given over the LNER/BR line that linked the two sites. Ruston & Hornsby 0-4-0DE No. 35, meanwhile, was delivered new to the Tyne Improvement Commission in 1953 for use on the sprawling network of lines that covered Whitehill Point in North Shields, with John Fowler 0-6-0DM No. 6, built in 1960 for Ribblesdale Cement; the restoration of the latter locomotive was given a high commendation at the 2025 HRA awards, which took place in Gateshead, as reported.

Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns 0-6-0ST No. 7098 of 1943 alongside a road engine. DAVID WATCHMAN/TR

Robert Stephenson 0-6-0T No. 2730 *Twizel* arrives at Marley Hill signalbox for the token exchange. KENNY FELSTEAD

Left: Five of the Tanfield Railway's fleet alongside four miniature road engines and a full-size one, all in steam. DAVID WATCHMAN/TR

Roaring success

The reliance on the home fleet for a gala can be perceived as risky by some, with many feeling a guest locomotive is necessary to draw the crowds – yet despite this, the railway still managed to attract nearly 700 passengers across the two days of running.

The weekend's timetable offered plenty of interesting movements to keep people amused and engaged, with double-headed workings and demonstration freight trains (including coal wagons, for which the line was predominantly used when first opened as a wagonway more than 300 years ago) just two highlights. Also making a brief revival were 'Causey Shuttles,' which ran between East Tanfield station and Causey Arch halt, situated adjacent to the 17th century Grade-I listed single-arch bridge of the same name which served the original wagonway when built in 1726 by stonemason Ralph Wood. Its construction was funded by a coalition of coal owners known as the Grand Allies. Upon its completion, it was the longest single-span bridge in the country, its arch spanning 31 metres. This record was held for 30 years until it was displaced by the William Edwards bridge in Pontypridd, Wales, which has a 47-yard span.

Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 1657 of 1920 NCB No. 32 *Stanley* pilots Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns 0-6-0ST No. 7098 of 1943 NCB No. 49 through the woods. KENNY FELSTEAD

"We had a fantastic weekend, and it was great to see the railway come alive with so much happening," said general manager David Watchman. "Seeing the line-up of road and rail steam outside Marley Hill shed was a personal highlight for me, and I think we proved you can put on a good show that appeals to people without having to worry about bringing expensive guest locomotives.

"That said, we now look forward to our June 19-21 Legends of Industry gala, at which we will have our six steam locomotives operating once again, alongside a guest which will soon be revealed."

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The NYMR has committed to getting a rake of four LNER Teak carriages back in service in time for the autumn steam gala in September. JOHN HUNT/NYMR

Moorsline teaks to return to service by the autumn

THE iconic teak carriages on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway are set to return to service later this year after the heritage line confirmed it was committing to undertaking the work that some of the beloved fleet requires to run once again.

Three of the four carriages mooted for a comeback are owned by the LNER Coach Association (BTO No. 43567 and TO Nos. 23956 and 56856), with the fourth being an accessible vehicle owned by the railway itself. The latter, No. 43632, is another Third Open type which has been modified as part of its fuss-free access coach project launched in 2023, set up with the aim of improving the railway's accessibility on its services. Whereas in the past, trains could sometimes only accommodate two wheelchairs, in some cases hidden away in the luggage compartment of brake vehicles, these modified carriages have had seating bays removed to create entire vehicles able to accommodate those with mobility aids.

The return of a four-strong teak set has been warmly welcomed by many. The rake has been out of action for about three years, with some vehicles awaiting bodywork repairs, while others need extensive running gear repairs below the solebar.

The agreement between the NYMR and LNERCA splits responsibility for the work on the latter group's fleet, with the LNERCA in charge of the carriage bodies, while the NYMR deals with the mechanical side. However, one of the reasons for the long wait has been the Moorsline's need to prioritise the limited available funding it has on other projects to keep the current services running, as detailed in our interview with CEO Laura Strangeway in *Heritage Railway* issue 339.

At the same time, she added that consideration was being given as to how best implement the historic vehicles in the railway's operations, ensuring that they are utilised in the best way possible to highlight the features that make them special against the ubiquitous BR Mk. 1 that forms the backbone of the NYMR's usual train formations.

To achieve this swift turnaround, spare carriage bogies have been acquired from another group which will be swapped with those requiring overhaul that are currently fitted to some of the carriages, meaning that vehicles needing the least amount of work can run again the soonest. The intention is that the first four will be complete in time to operate at the September 24-27 steam gala.

"We are very happy to see the teak carriages return to the track this year," said Laura.

"The heritage appeal of the coaches is undeniable, and I'm sure they will enhance our passengers' visits to the gala as they travel through the stunning scenery of the North York Moors National Park in such style.

"We would like to thank our colleagues at LNERCA, our carriage and wagon team, and everyone who has championed the restoration of these stunning teak carriages."

Solar power set to be big saver for Romney's energy consumption

THE railway with a 'Green Goddess' in its fleet has gone green big time.

On May 22, the new solar installation at the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway's New Romney was officially opened by MP Tony Vaughan, followed by a train ride to celebrate the railway's move to renewable energy.

Solar panels have been fitted to the roofs of two engine sheds, the café and the exhibition hall at the station, and also on top of the End of the Line restaurant at Dungeness station.

The installation is expected to save RH&DR up to £18,000 a year in energy bills, cutting grid electricity use and significantly reducing carbon emissions.

The project will deliver about 110,000 kWh per year, most of which will be used by the railway, with only a small amount being sold back to the grid.

The move to solar energy was made possible by Kent Community Energy, a community benefit society, as part of its first-ever rooftop project, along with installers Bloom Renewables and a grant from Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

RHDR did not have to invest any money in the renewable energy scheme. Instead, as part of a 20-year contract, it granted rooftop space to KCE, which owns the equipment and will sell the energy back to the railway at a lower cost than current energy providers.

RH&DR general manager Stuart Ross said: "Our railway is vital to the district by bringing in thousands of tourists every year and providing jobs in the community. However, the cost of running the railway has increased hugely over the last few years because of spiralling energy costs.

"Now, the solar panels will help us to improve our environmental credentials while making cost savings. The service delivered by KCE and its installers will help the railway to survive into its second century, and future generations can continue to enjoy riding our world-famous trains from Hythe to Dungeness."

The new solar panel roof at New Romney station. ELATE MEDIA

➜ Times past to the forefront at Romney gala: see News, page 14.

Nene Valley sets up 'operational cost of living' appeal fund

THE Nene Valley Railway has launched a new Resilience Fund to secure its future in the face of rising operational costs.

Like heritage railways around the UK, it receives no government funding and depends on a combination of ticket income, donations, and the dedication of 350-plus volunteers – a model which is under growing strain, said a statement from the railway.

It is now calling on the public, local businesses and supporters to help safeguard the line's future.

"Steam coal now costs about £3.50 per shovel, equating to roughly £335 per round trip, with prices continuing to rise," said the statement. "Visiting locomotives can cost thousands of pounds per day to hire. Essential overhauls, required every 10 years, can exceed hundreds of thousands of pounds.

"Refurbishing a single passenger carriage can cost more than £20,000 before structural work. Track renewals can exceed £120,000 per quarter-mile. These are not optional expenditures; they are the minimum required to keep the railway operating safely."

Resilience and reserves

The railway's Back On Track appeal, launched in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, helped stabilise finances, but rebuilding reserves to a secure level remains an ongoing challenge. The Resilience Fund has been created to complete that work and build a stronger foundation for the years ahead.

Chairman Michael Purcell said: "Ticket sales help enormously, but they have never been enough on their own. The Resilience Fund is about making sure we are here for the long term, protecting what we have built and ensuring we can continue to offer something genuinely special for our community and visitors. If you value what this railway represents, now is a good time to show it."

Supporters can contribute through a one-off donation, a regular monthly gift, membership, corporate sponsorship, or simply by visiting the railway and encouraging others to do the same. Volunteers with time and skills to offer are also always welcome.

➜ For details on how to contribute to the new fund, visit nvr.org.uk/product.php/164/resilience-fund

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'Something for everyone' at Severn Valley diesel do

By Owen Hayward

ENTHUSIASTS flocked to another packed-out Severn Valley Railway Spring Diesel festival, which saw 19 different locomotives and units in action during a four-day weekend.

The event on May 14-17 brought in eight visitors to join the resident locomotive and multiple unit fleet, with Class 35 'Hymek' D7018 appearing thanks to the Diesel and Electric Preservation Group at the West Somerset, straight from its lengthened stay at the Great Central Railway.

Also drafted in were Class 55 Deltic No. 55009 *Alycidon* (courtesy of the Deltic Preservation Society), Class 56 No. 56049 (Colas Rail), Class 57 Nos. 57010 (West Coast Railways), 57306 (GB Railfreight) and 57604 (GWR), Class 59 No. 59001 (Heavy Haul Rail) and Class 67 No. 67006 (DB Cargo).

They joined a trio of Class 20s, along with examples of classes 17, 33, 42, 46 and 50 and one of the SVR's DMU sets, while Class 14 D9551, Class 42 D821 *Greyhound* and Class 52 D1015 *Western Champion*, along with the visiting 'Hymek,' offered a quartet of diesel-hydraulic haulage opportunities, with some of the heritage locomotives used as brake translators to allow air-only main line visitors to work with the line's vacuum-braked coaching stock.

SVR visitor engagement manager Lewis Maddox said: "The annual Spring Diesel Festival has once again proved popular, with some 4500 passengers travelling on the railway during the four days.

"A new-style timetable worked well, with the only challenge being on Saturday, when a herd of cows got out of their field!"

SVR managing director Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster added: "Our May event is really focused on something for everyone. We find that modern locomotives are also appreciated by the audience, so we always try to source some of these where we can. This year we wanted to mark 40 years of the Class 59s by having as many General Motors types as possible."

He also criticised the behaviour of some passengers who were captured in video footage standing on tables and leaning excessively out of carriage windows. "This behaviour must stop," he said. "It's dangerous and disrespectful to the thousands of volunteer hours that go into restoring these carriages. We want people to enjoy our events, but they must behave sensibly!"

West Coast Railways Class 57 No. 57010 approaches Bewdley Tunnel with the 12.05pm Arley to Kidderminster service on May 15. TOM MCATEE

Above: No. 20142 *Sir John Betjeman* was one of three Class 20s which took part. DAVID BLISSETT

Right: Colas Rail Class 56 No. 56049 exits Bewdley Tunnel with a Kidderminster Town to Arley service on May 15. TOM MCATEE

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Above: DB Cargo Class 67 No. 67006 at Bridgnorth. DAVID BLISSETT

Left: Class 46 No. 46045 with the 4.25pm Kidderminster to Bridgnorth service crossing Victoria Bridge at Arley on May 15. TOM MCATEE

Visiting Deltic No. 55009 *Alycidon* heads a passenger service during the gala. JASON HOOD

Heavy Haul Rail Class 59 No. 59001 back in Foster Yeoman livery alongside fellow visitor Class 35 'Hymek' D7018. DAVID BLISSETT

Dine on board with Epping Ongar's new Restaurant on Rails experiences

By Owen Hayward

ON-TRAIN dining is not a new offering for the Epping Ongar Railway, but a rebrand of its products and new menus are set to take it beyond the simple fish-and-chips offering.

Recognising that its local villages of North Weald and Ongar have very few eateries, the EOR has established Restaurant on Rails, serving up a two-course meal on board a train as it travels through the Essex countryside between the two stations, with hopes of boosting the railway's appeal to those who not only visit from afar, but who also live locally and are looking for an interesting evening out.

Market potential

"When I look at where we are geographically – certainly at North Weald more so than Ongar – there are some 3000 or so dwellings in a fairly affluent area," general manager Nick Arthurton said. "We know that food is popular – as proven by our successful fish-and-chips trains – so we're introducing the RoR to give loyal and new customers more choice.

"A lot of people will work in London, so they will commute in and out, but there aren't very many places to eat locally without jumping into a car. You could go to Epping, a nice market town with plenty to offer, or there's Ongar, which is smaller, but North Weald in particular feels like it is devoid of somewhere interesting you can go to for a meal on a Friday night. I thought that, with a bit of investment, perhaps we could fill that gap, which led to this idea for this new brand of dining experience.

"This will hopefully have the benefit of not only creating a commercial opportunity for the railway but also provide a strong connection with the local community. Being in a reasonably prosperous area, I think people would be pleased to have that, and I'm sure we could work with them to create the right food offering and presentation to make that viable. It will get people talking about the EOR as an attraction and also as an important part of the community.

"It is surprising how many people living locally still don't know we are here or say they have never visited. I've met such people while queuing in the local Post Office and ask them why, and they reply with things such as not really knowing what the railway does or if it is something for them."

The improved catering experience will see meals supplied by an external local business and served on board one of the railway's Mk. 1 TSO carriages, suitably adorned for the occasion.

The first of these ran on May 24, serving up sausage and mash, followed by a crumble with cream for dessert. Future dates will see Mexican-style enchiladas and New York cheesecake served on July 18, lasagne and tiramisu on August 22, and finally curry and fruit salad on September 12.

Nick added that with the railway's limited resources making it a challenge to serve using "posh crockery," meals will be served instead street food-style using a recyclable hamper, helping to reduce the railway's environmental impact.

"This is fun dining rather than fine dining, and it is priced accordingly. Our bar team will also sell reasonably priced drinks from the onboard bar.

Gradual expansion

"Our aim is to start with 40 covers and progressively increase our capacity on the evening trains that to at least 100 covers. We must be ambitious, because selling a high volume of food using this model is the only way to make it work."

Priced at £37.50 per person, tickets also allow for unlimited travel on other services running at the EOR on the same day. To book, visit www.eorailway.co.uk/visit/dining-trains

➜ Read our interview with Nick: see feature, pages 76-79.

Above: *Fox,* from the Whistlestop Valley Railway, heads across the marshes on May 16. STEVEN TOWN

Left: Headed by six locomotives, the 'Fifteen Inch Flyer Finale' closed proceedings on May 17. RHDR

Times past to the forefront at Romney's 'generational' gala

By Robin Jones

THE Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway's May 16/17 Spring Steam & Diesel Gala was a real nostalgia trip for the many enthusiasts who have supported this famous narrow-gauge railway during its near 100-year history.

Taylor 2-6-2T *Fox* of 1987, from the Whistlestop Valley Railway, and Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway's 1966-built Clarkson 2-8-2 *River Mite* joined Romney's fleet for this prestigious event, complementing the resident steam line-up and slotting effortlessly into the timetable like regular members of the fleet.

The event kicked off with a 'Beach Camp Special' which ran to Romney Sands tender first, before returning up the line on a non-stop run to Dymchurch, replicating the special trains that have hauled holiday camp tourists to the seaside for many years.

Other historic named trains from over the years ran too, including 'The Blue Train,' which originally operated in 1937 when Davey Paxman 4-6-2 No. 8 *Hurricane* was painted blue and named 'Bluebottle' after it 'disgraced' itself over third-cylinder issues. 'The Blue Train,' complete with blue and cream coaches, ran from 1966 to 1969, six decades ago.

'The Marshlander' referenced the RH&DR's Supporters' Association membership publication; this train first ran in 1956, and has regularly featured as an annual association special train throughout the years.

The Saturday ended with an evening finale to celebrate Davey Paxman's 4-8-2 No. 6 *Samson*'s 100th birthday. *Samson* led this 21-mile triple-header non-stop alongside Canadian-built YEC 4-6-2s No. 9 *Winston Churchill* and No. 10 *Doctor Syn*.

Sunday started in the same way that Saturday finished – with non-stops flying through New Romney station in both directions.

Romney's diesel No. 12 *J B Snell* ran a rare non-stop trip from Romney Sands to Dymchurch. It was followed by a Davey Paxman 4-6-2 No. 1 *Green Goddess* 'Parade' special, displaying a replica headboard that was carried when certain well-known 'magic kingdom' characters once visited the line in 1972.

Bringing a successful weekend at the RH&DR to a close, the visiting northern locomotives took pride of place during the gala's 'Fifteen Inch Flyer Finale' on Sunday evening, leading the way with Romney's home steam fleet across the Marsh in spectacular fashion.

The 'Fifteen Inch Flyer' originally ran in 1981, double-headed and driven by Richard Batten and Eric Copping. About 20 years later it ran again, this time led by Richard's son, Simon Batten, on No. 6 *Samson*.

Just over 20 years after that, and inspiring yet another generation of Romney drivers, it ran again, leading the finale, first on *Samson* and then on *River Mite,* where Simon Batten once more led the front of the train. Might we see this train again in another 20 years with the next generation of Romney drivers?

No. 1 *Green Goddess* and No. 10 *Doctor Syn* double-head the 'Golden Arrow' across the shingle. STEVEN TOWN

'The Marshlander' with Davey Paxman 4-8-2 No. 5 *Hercules* in 1956. RHDR

The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway's 2-8-2 *River Mite* at work in a landscape that markedly differs from that of the Lake District. STEVEN TOWN

A beach holiday camp special headed by No. 6 *Samson* in Hythe in 1964. RHDR

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Farewell to railway operator and expert writer Geoffrey Kichenside

PROLIFIC railway author Geoffery Kichenside, who with his wife Paula ran the 7 ¼in Gorse Blossom Railway, near Newton Abbot, has died aged 93.

Born on August 21, 1932, Geoffrey grew up in Kenton in London, attending the Lower School of John Lyon in Harrow, and sought a career in the transportation industry.

He joined Ian Allan and produced the legendary Locospotters books, became the editor of *Railway World* (the forerunner to our sister title, *Railways Illustrated*) and *Model Railway Constructor* and went on to write 18 books, signalling being one of his prime topics.

Among his books were Great Train Disasters – The World's Worst Railway Accidents; Orion and the Golde Arrow: Story of a Pullman Car; Settle to Carlisle Railway; 150 years of Railway Carriages; and The Restaurant Car: A Century of Railway Catering.

In the early 1970s, he moved to Newton Abbot-based publisher David & Charles, which appointed him as editor of the company's railway books, a role he held for a decade.

An O gauge modeller who became involved with the 7 ¼in Great Cockcrow Railway in Surrey, Geoffrey decided he should build his own railway, choosing a 38-acre site adjoining the old A38 at nearby Bickington. Much of the railway equipment had previously operated on the Buckfastleigh Miniature Railway.

George Kichenside. PAULA KICHENSIDE

Known for its scenic woodland setting, the line ran in a three-quarters-of-a-mile loop on 10 acres of the land and opened in 1984. It had a replica Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Baldwin 2-6-2T *Yeo,* and could carry up to 60 passengers at a time, and also a G-scale LGB layout, a drive-your-own train, assault course, kids play area and woodland walks.

The couple, who lived in Bovey Tracey, ran the railway for 18 years. The park was sold in 1998 and carried on until 2003, when it finally closed. The land was then sold and converted into an upmarket camping site.

Rather than retire, Geoffrey joined the Dart Valley Railway for a time. Because of his knowledge, the BBC would often invite him to appear on the news whenever there were problems with the railways in and around Plymouth.

Geoffrey, who was living in a care home, is survived by his wife.

Following months of refurbishment, the Churnet Valley Railway's unique BR RK No. 80030 has returned to service in time for the start of the new season. The vehicle is believed to be the only surviving original full kitchen coach of its type in the country still retaining its original purpose and layout. CVR

Action-packed summer night on the Nene Valley on offer

THE Nene Valley Railway is to stage a special after-dark event.

Into the Night – Mixed Traction, taking place on August 22, will include intensive services, mixed traction and night running.

The event, which will start in mid-afternoon, will feature a steam locomotive yet to be confirmed alongside Class 45 'Peak' No. 45041, Class 14 No. 14029, Rolls-Royce Sentinel 0-6-0DH No. 10271 of 197 Mo. DL83 and Class 143 'Pacer' No. 143602.

There will Fletton branch services including the 'Fletton Flyer' departing from Wansford at 8.35pm, plus a triple-headed night service and licensed buffet cars, and the Overton Station Café and yard will be open.

For over-18s, cab rides in No. 45041 are available, with freight train brake van rides also on offer.

Driver for a Tenner sessions will be available on No. DL83.

The proceeds of this event will directly benefit the Overton Goods Yard Project.

For details and to book, visit https://nvr.org.uk/product.php/707/into-the-night

Two Phils are appointed to help boost ELR's finances

THE East Lancashire Railway has appointed two new members of the operating company.

Phil Warren, director of commercial services, founded and developed his own business within the health and public safety sector, building successful strategies and delivering sustainable growth. With nearly 25 years' experience at senior leadership level, he brings extensive expertise in private ambulance services, event medical provision, and the supply of services to railway heritage organisations.

He said: "The ELR has always been important to me as a local resident, and I had long intended to contribute. I am excited to roll up my sleeves, and to meet the excellent staff and dedicated volunteers."

Phil Mckennell becomes director of partnerships and contracts, a new board portfolio focusing on developing rail-related partnerships, building on the recent Network Rail agreement.

Left: Phil Warren.
Right: Phil Mckennell. BOTH: ELR

With more than 40 years' experience as a senior leader in rail and logistics, Phil brings extensive industry knowledge and a strong network of relationships. His career has been defined by driving revenue growth, developing effective commercial strategies, and leading stakeholder engagement in UK rail, intermodal freight, and transport services.

Phil will work closely with the general manager to unlock new revenue streams that have previously been out of reach, while establishing mutually beneficial partnerships that deliver sustainable financial growth.

He said: "As a local resident, I have long been aware of the ELR and have many fond memories of family visits, including Santa specials and Thomas events. I fully recognise the dedication of the volunteers and staff who make the railway such a valued national asset. I look forward to using my experience to help secure new revenue opportunities."

An ELR statement said: "Both directors join the board at this challenging time to help drive up revenues and secure influential new partnerships which help achieve the board's ambition of achieving high levels of sustainability to preserve the heritage railway's long history."

Weardale trip for Dementia Week

A DEDICATED heritage rail experience was held on the Weardale Railway in support of National Dementia Week. About 60 people living with dementia and their carers boarded the heritage DMU service at Bishop Auckland West for a trip to Stanhope, with the train pausing along the route to allow passengers to take in the countryside in a relaxed and supportive environment.

The initiative was organised following an approach from Kim Wallace, dementia advisor for the Durham and Sunderland area with the Alzheimer's Society, with the aim of creating meaningful shared experiences for those affected by dementia. Community choir The Weardale Warblers hosted a singalong on board.

WR general manager Claire Gibbons said: "Our volunteers are proud to support this event that brings people together."

Beachy Head impresses at Didcot during first trip away

By Robin Jones
Pictures by Frank Dumbleton

AWARD-WINNING new-build LBSCR H2 Atlantic No. No 32424 *Beachy Head* made its first trip away from its Bluebell Railway birthplace to another heritage line as the star guest at Didcot Railway Centre's May 23-25 bank holiday Heritage in Motion special featuring non-stop action throughout.

Beachy Head, which won the Heritage Railway Association's Steam Locomotive Award 2025, as highlighted in issue 329, hauled passenger train rides on the centre's main demonstration line, taking turns with GWR 4-6-0 No. 4079 *Pendennis Castle*. At the end of each afternoon, the pair ran together double-headed in a show of power from rival regions.

On the Saturday evening, a Timeline Events photographic charter featured *Beachy Head* posed on the turntable, which, appropriately, is a Southern Railway one from Southampton Docks. The original Didcot turntable was removed in the 1960s, and the Southampton one became available in the 1970s. The photographers stayed until 10pm, by which time it was almost completely dark, to see the final act of the fire being dropped.

The original No. 32424 was built in 1911, withdrawn in April 1958, and scrapped a month later. The Bluebell announced in October 2000 that it planned to build a new Brighton Atlantic, with a GNR Atlantic boiler and an LBSCR B4 tender chassis. The new *Beachy Head,* which debuted at the Bluebell on August 18, 2024, incorporates the original's regulator handle.

During the event, the branch demonstration line was the preserve of GWR 2-6-2T No. 4144, hauling both passenger and goods trains.

Elsewhere on the site, Avonside 0-4-0ST No. 1340 *Trojan* gave extended shunting demonstrations, including pushing a wagon up the coal stage embankment, and riding on the carriage shed traverser. Its open-backed cab was much appreciated by the footplate crew in the extremely hot weather.

The coal stage and turntable were in use, and the lifting shop, not normally accessible to the public, was opened to demonstrate hoisting a boiler.

The new *Beachy Head* double-heading with *Pendennis Castle*.

Avonside 0-4-0ST No. 1340 on the traverser, which is powered by a small diesel engine in the tractor that moves the table from side to side.

On Southern Railway territory: No. 32424 on the Southampton Docks turntable.

The fire dropped from *Beachy Head* after the Timeline Events photographic charter on May 23.

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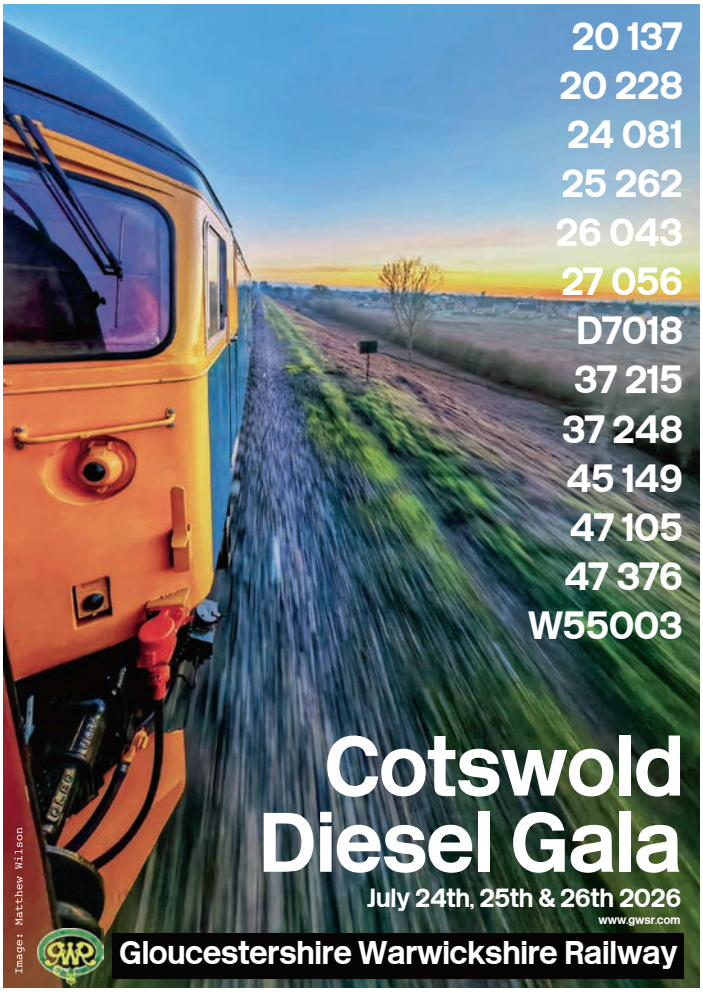

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Issue 1 4d — **Peak Rail Echo** — 19TH SEPT 1944

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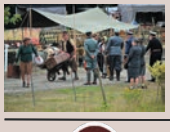

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Arthur Wharton. DARLINGTON BC

How railways facilitated the football revolution!

A MAJOR new exhibition celebrating the life and legacy of Arthur Wharton, widely recognised as both the world's first professional black footballer and the first recorded fastest man, is to be staged at the multiple award-winning Hopetown Darlington museum attraction this summer.

Titled Arthur Wharton: He Changed The World From Here, the exhibition explores the story of a remarkable athlete helped shape modern sport.

Born in the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1865, Wharton came to Britain and quickly established himself as a record-breaking sprinter and an accomplished footballer, cricketer and rugby player. His professional sporting journey began in Darlington, before he went on to play for clubs including Preston North End, Rotherham Town and Sheffield United.

Coun Libby McCollom, Darlington Borough Council's cabinet member for local services, said: "Arthur Wharton's story is one of international significance, but it is deeply rooted here in Darlington. We are incredibly proud to share his legacy on a national stage, highlighting the role our town played in shaping modern sport – the crucial link with Darlington's proud railway history – and celebrating a figure whose influence continues to resonate today."

The exhibition also highlights the crucial role played by Britain's railways in the development of organised sport. In the late 19th century, railway networks enabled teams and supporters to travel further and faster, helping football grow into a national game rooted in working communities.

The exhibition is delivered in partnership with the Arthur Wharton Foundation and supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. It will open at 10am on June 11 in Hopetown Darlington's Carriage Works and close on August 31.

Admission is free, and tickets can be booked at www.hopetowndarlington.co.uk/arthurwharton

Big boost for Minehead leadership team with new board appointments

By Robin Jones

FORMER Didcot Railway Centre chief executive Clive Hetherington has joined the West Somerset Railway as Britain's longest standard gauge heritage line strengthens its leadership team with board advisers.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 343, Clive resigned from the Great Western Society-run centre following a 'governance' dispute.

He has now been appointed interim chief executive at the WSR to support operational delivery and strategic development during a period of increased demand and ongoing financial pressures facing the heritage railway sector, said a statement from the line's plc.

The plc has also announced the appointment of four new volunteer board advisers as part of a wider strategy to strengthen leadership, governance and long-term resilience at the railway. It recently completed a comprehensive review of its five-year strategic plan

Fresh expertise

Following an open invitation for expressions of interest at recent volunteer meetings, candidates underwent a formal shortlisting and interview process. The successful applicants attended the plc board meeting on April 28 and will initially serve as board advisers for a three-month period before potential appointment as full directors. The four people will bring extensive expertise in railway operations, engineering, compliance, commercial development and strategic management.

Richard Campaign (operations) is long-standing WSR volunteer and gala planning team member who currently works in timetable strategy at Transport for Wales, supporting major rail transformation projects and main line steam operations. Richard Granger (compliance) has volunteered on the WSR for 27 years and has experience in signalling, infrastructure engineering and operational standards. He is an associate professor at Royal Holloway, University of London, and has spent decades advising organisations worldwide on technology and operations management.

> "We remain a forward-thinking railway and cannot afford to stand still."

Martin Fuller (steam traction) is an experienced heritage railway engineer and steam driver with leadership roles at the Talyllyn Railway, Foxcote Manor Society and Tyseley Locomotive Works, and he also serves as steam locomotive roster clerk at the WSR.

Bailey Maxwell (commercial) is a fireman and vice-chairman of the railway's gala planning team, who brings commercial and product strategy expertise from the aerospace software sector, alongside active involvement in heritage locomotive construction projects.

'Next step'

The new advisers will work alongside the existing board, comprising chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt, Joy Boswell, Frank Courtney, Rowan Joachim, Malcolm Smith and Robin Wichard.

Jonathan said: "We have been looking for some time to strengthen the board, recognising both the challenges we face and the level of commitment required to ensure the railway continues to develop and excel.

"This is about taking the next step – ensuring the board is structured and equipped to deliver effectively at all levels. We remain a forward-thinking railway and cannot afford to stand still. Strengthening our leadership team is an important step in supporting the long-term future of the WSR."

➜ **West Somerset Spring Steam Gala success: see feature, pages 82-86.**

Help restore another signalbox at Kirkby Stephen East

AN appeal has been launched to restore the Kirkby Stephen East Junction signalbox at the Stainmore Railway.

Kirkby Stephen East had three signalboxes throughout its working life. Since preservationists took over the site and redeveloped the trackwork, the need for signalling has become a priority. The two tall timbers required for the iconic signal gantry were reinstated in 2018, and now the entire signalling system is being rebuilt from the ground up.

The reconstruction of the original Stockton & Darlington Railway signalbox from 1861 is now complete, and is thought to be the oldest working 'box in the world. The Junction signalbox is now the last remaining hurdle, and its absence is said to leave a huge hole in the station throat. During 2025, supported by £213,108 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Stainmore Railway Company has been busy delivering West Side Story – the Forgotten History of the S&DR in Cumberland, Westmorland & Furness.

The original Kirkby Stephen Junction signalbox. JOHN BOYES

Foundations for the new Junction signalbox on May 6. LCLT

However, unlike the S&DR 'box, there will be no grants towards the rebuild of the Junction 'box, so it must be self-funded. Its brick construction will make for a simpler project than the complex stone build of the S&DR 'box, but fundraising must begin to make it happen.

A two-stage project will commence with the construction of the 'box itself, restoring the pre-1962 appearance to the station (target £15,000); followed by a fitting of the 40-lever frame to restore it to operation £25,000).

➜ **For details of how to contribute, see the advertisement on page 59 or email lclt.chairman@gmail.com**

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Strathaven's 77-year steaming success

Words and pictures by Hugh Dougherty

TWELVE locomotives gathered on the Strathaven Miniature Railway to mark the 77th birthday of Scotland's oldest miniature line in fine style.

The furthest-travelled steamers on May 14 came from Cumbria and Newcastle, while 2-6-0 *Margaret,* which pulled the first train on May 14, 1949, was also in action. The line's stalwart is allowed to be driven only by members of a top-link pool of drivers, trained in the ways of this historic locomotive.

Flying the flag for the 20 young volunteers recruited by the railway to ensure that it sees many more birthdays was 13-year-old Nathaniel Fishbaugh, who bought 5in gauge battery-powered Class 66 *Royal Sovereign* from the railway to use it as his own with full running powers.

Nathaniel, who wants to be a full-scale train driver when he leaves school, has been interested in the railway from his earliest years.

"Nathaniel was very keen to become involved," said dad Randall. "He's been a member for several years now, and so successful has the line's youth policy been that there's now a waiting list. When we heard that the loco was for sale, we jumped at the chance both for Nathaniel to learn more about it and for it to stay on the SMR."

An exotic touch was provided by Kevin Parson's 0-4-0 *Elikapika,* based on a Hawaii sugar plantation locomotive, up from its Carlisle home for the event, while the railway's secretary, Ian Samson, now immortalised on a ticket office window mural on the wall of the line's station building, rolled out his superb Great Western 14XX in steam.

"It was a bit of a family effort," said Ian. "I was helped by my sons, Kerr and Richard, both society members, and we were proud to have who we believe is Scotland's only Italian passed steam engine driver in the shape of Lavinia Calvi, Kerr's partner, at the regulator. My thanks go to all who attended to make the event, which included a very enjoyable buffet lunch, such a success.

"We'd like to remind *Heritage Railway* readers that we run every Saturday and Sunday throughout the summer, and if you're in the Glasgow are be sure to visit us. You'll be very welcome indeed."

➜ **Full details of opening times are at https://strathavenminiaturerailway.org**

Above: Tickets, please! Secretary Ian Samson comes face-to-face with the mural of himself at Strathaven station.

Left: Strathaven stalwart 2-6-0 *Margaret* reprised the first train run on the railway on May 14, 1949.

Above: The youngest driver on the day, Nathan Fishbaugh, and his father Randall, with Nathan's battery-powered Class 66 *Royal Sovereign*.

Right: Strathaven Miniature Railway secretary Ian Samson ran his GWR 14XX, aided by sons Kerr and Richard, and Kerr's partner, Lavinia Calvi, Scotland's only qualified Italian steam locomotive driver!

A cavalcade gets ready for the off from Strathaven station.

Last Manning Wardle prepared to receive new smokebox

A NEW smokebox construction has been trial-fitted to a Severn Valley Railway-based industrial locomotive which has not run for nearly half a century.

Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST No. 2047 of 1926 was the last locomotive to be built by Manning Wardle & Co before the company went into voluntary liquidation in 1927 as a result of the post-First World War recession.

It was delivered to Rugby Portland Cement Co Ltd (RPC) at its New Bilton Works. Replaced by diesel traction, it was withdrawn in December 1966 and offered for sale the following year, when it was bought for £150 by the then Warwickshire Industrial Locomotive Preservation Group, now the Warwickshire Industrial Locomotive Preservation Trust, which was formed to preserve it, and it moved to the SVR.

First steamed in December 1968, it was named *Warwickshire* in 1971 and worked in every year until withdrawal in December 1977. Its long-awaited overhaul began back in November 2010, rewheeling taking place in December 2018, and it was then moved to Bewdley Down Yard for restoration to continue.

An order for a new boiler was placed with Israel Newton in March 2023.

Right: The new smokebox construction trial-fitted on May 10. BRIAN HILL/WILPT

Lottery gives Loughborough £250k grant to spend on innovation

THE Great Central Railway has been awarded a £250,000 National Heritage Lottery Fund grant to power its next stage of innovation.

It will support a programme of activities focused on enhancing the volunteer experience, enriching visits for passengers, and advancing environmental sustainability.

A significant element of the funding is dedicated to volunteers and will support the recruitment of an ambassador role, alongside improvements to induction and training, stronger support arrangements, and outreach work with schools and underrepresented communities.

"The aim is to make volunteering at the Great Central Railway an even more rewarding experience, while helping to attract and retain the people who keep Britain's only double-track main line heritage railway running," said a GCR statement.

Exploring opportunities

Developing future visitor experiences, pilot projects linked to the railway's long-term vision as Britain's Living Railway, exploring new ways of bringing the railway's rich stories to life, with early concepts including enhanced interpretation, immersive living history experiences, and the use of heritage buses to encourage visitors to discover more of the railway and the surrounding area during their visit are also on the agenda as part of the new funding.

A funded environmental sustainability plan will help the railway better understand its environmental impact and identify opportunities to reduce waste, improve energy efficiency and support biodiversity.

"This successful bid also strengthens the railway's ability to pursue larger strategic heritage projects in future, including those connected to Reunification and the continued long-term development of the line," the statement continued.

"The achievement reflects the dedication and commitment shown across the organisation by its staff and volunteers."

Cumbrian celebrations as La'al Ratty's *Northern Rock* turns 50

By Owen Hayward

HERITAGE railways love anniversaries as they create strong marketing points, particularly if it is a notable locomotive, so for the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway to have two fall into its lap undoubtedly proved to be a golden goose for its May 2-4 steam gala.

Opened to passengers in 1876, this year marks the 150th anniversary of the 15in-gauge La'al Ratty line, which runs through the Lake District between Ravenglass, where in meets the Cumbrian line, and Dalegarth. Not only that, 2026 also marks the golden jubilee for one of its popular steam locomotives, No. 10 *Northern Rock*, which was built in-house at the Ravenglass workshops in 1976.

With a need for new steam locomotives being recognised, 4-6-2 No. 2 *Northern Chief* was borrowed from the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway in 1971 for comparative trials. From this, designers identifed the best features for the gauge for their new design; its enlarged boiler and cylinders were based on those from RER resident 2-8-2 No. 7 *River Esk*, the outside frames and sliding centre axle copied from No. 3 *River Irt*, and the regulator and springing based on that used on *Northern Chief*. The result was a locomotive of narrow gauge outline to match the RER's saloon carriages, with robust components that minimised the maintenance required.

Construction began in 1973 using a boiler built by Hunslet's locomotive works in Leeds. The unfinished locomotive first steamed in March 1976, ahead of full entry into service at the railway's centenary celebrations later that same year. It has been cited as one of the most powerful locomotives of its gauge in the world, and the design has been replicated for two locomotives exported for use in Japan (*Northern Rock II* in January 1990, followed by *Cumbria* in 1992).

The final day of the gala was headed by eight steam locomotives, seen departing Ravenglass led by Bassett-Lowke Atlantic *Synolda*. RER

Guests small – and smaller!

For the occasion, the RER brought in a trio of guests to appear alongside the home steam and diesel fleet. *Katie* and *Sian*, from the Whistlestop Valley Railway, are 2-4-2 locomotives dating from 1954 and 1963 respectively. *Katie* was built by Trevor Guest for Dudley Zoo's railway, entering service there in 1956 and later moving to the Fairbourne Railway in Wales, where it joined *Sian*, which was outshopped by Guest Engineering & Maintenance Co in Stourbridge and has since been a resident and regular RER guest.

The third visitor was somewhat smaller than these. No. 10 *Sir Arthur Heywood* is a 7 ¼in gauge version of *Northern Rock* and resides at the Eastleigh Lakeside Railway. Too small to work trains along the RER, it was instead placed onto a flatbed and transported around the railway throughout the three-day gala, making for some unusual sights and mirroring a similar arrangement when *River Mite* visited the Talyllyn Railway in July last year.

In total, 11 locomotives ran at the event, with *Sir Arthur Heywood* bringing the physical total to 12. As well as full-line trips, shuttles to Irton Road gave the smaller locomotives a chance to shine. Saturday concluded with a parade of locomotives at Barrow Marsh, followed by a grand finale on the bank holiday Monday that saw the eight steam locomotives pull a double-length passenger set, with the visiting miniature of *Northern Rock* immediately behind its

Visiting 2-4-2 *Katie* leads RER resident 0-4-0T of the same name and *River Irt* away from The Green on the bank holiday Monday of the RER's 150th anniversary gala. COURTENAY FORDER

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Visiting duo *Sian* and *Katie* approach Miteside Halt on May 4. COURTENAY FORDER

***Northern Rock* and it's 7¼in counterpart *Sir Arthur Heywood* approach The Green on May 3.** COURTENAY FORDER

larger counterpart.

"What a truly memorable bank holiday weekend celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Northern Rock*," said general manager Nicky Williams. "One of the most special moments of all was seeing this much-loved, home-built locomotive reunited with Ian Smith and Ian Page, the engineers who built it.

"It was wonderful to see so many staff, volunteers and visitors experiencing the very best of our narrow gauge railway during a year in which we are also proudly celebrating 150 years of carrying passengers.

"The gala featured an action-packed timetable, with an array of fascinating locomotive and carriage set combinations. On Saturday evening, the marsh came alive to the unforgettable sound of steam whistles and a narrow gauge steam cavalcade returning to Ravenglass, while Monday's remarkable octuple steam engine header provided a truly fitting grand finale.

"I would like to thank all of our staff and volunteers for their dedication and hard work in organising and delivering such a successful event, as well as to the teams at Whistlestop Valley and Eastleigh Lakeside Miniature Railway for providing such wonderful visiting locomotives. Most importantly, thank-you to everyone who visited and supported the gala. Your enthusiasm and support make events like this happen."

***Sir Arthur Heywood* in the Ravenglass museum alongside the other larger exhibits, where it will remain for the rest of the 2026 season.** RER

First World War petrol Simplex joins Skegness fleet

By Robin Jones

A FIRST World War Motor Rail Simplex has moved from the Imperial War Museum at Duxford to the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway.

The 600mm gauge locomotive, No. 3849 of 1918, has been acquired by the railway's charitable Historic Vehicles Trust from the previous owner, who had loaned it to the museum for use on the demonstration line which formed part of the land warfare display, showing how narrow gauge railways played a vital role in moving supplies and troops to the trenches.

That display and the railway have now been closed, prompting the owner to sell it to the LCLR to join the extensive array of wartime railway vehicles at Skegness.

It is the first petrol-powered example at the LCLR.

At one stage, the Simplex was also displayed in the now closed Museum of Army Transport at Beverley.

Trust chairman Richard Shepherd said: "This is a significant addition to our collection and helps us show how narrow gauge railways made possible the Allied victory in the First World War and later helped develop agriculture and industry in Lincolnshire when some were sold to the Nocton Estates Railway, moving potatoes, sugar beet and fertiliser across the fens when roads and lorries were too primitive to do so.

"We will take our time to assess its condition and add some missing components before attempting to start the loco, but we hope to have it on display at some of the events we are planning for our 2026 season, including in a cavalcade at the conclusion of our Narrow Gauge at Work event on June 19/20."

The First World War veteran Simplex now at Skegness. DAVE ENEFER/LCLR

Celebrating all things Simplex at Apedale Valley weekend

THE Apedale Valley Light Railway is to stage a special weekend dedicated to Motor Rail locomotives.

Motor Rail Mania will take place on June 27/28 at Newcastle-under-Lyme 2ft gauge line, highlighting the Bedford builders best known for Simplex locomotives.

Motor Rail began building locomotives in Lewes, East Sussex, and in 1916 moved to Bedford, becoming one of the UK's most prolific builders of narrow-gauge internal combustion locomotives.

The firm continued manufacturing until 1987, when it was sold to Alan Keef Ltd, of Ross-on-Wye, which continues to provide spares and build locomotives to Motor Rail designs.

Work was ongoing round the clock to complete the restoration of Motor Rail No. 7522 of 1948 in time for it to run at the event. It is one of only two known survivors of the manufacturer's 8/12HP class and ran for several years at the school railway in Cheadle, where it was first restored.

Following a serious engine failure, a replacement one is being fitted.

Guest locomotives will include Motor Rail Nos. 8695 and 1049, which run as Nos. 30 and 43 respectively on the Leighton Buzzard Railway, and Nos. 8739 of 1942 *Pioneer* and 60S364 of 1968 *Campbells*.

A rarely-seen visitor will be Motor Rail No. 8540, owned by Gareth Rees, which may never have worked a passenger train before.

Trains will operate using Motor Rail diesel and petrol locomotives. An early-morning photographic charter will be held at 7.30am on the Saturday, themed around the Leighton Buzzard sand quarries. To book a place, visit www.avlr.org.uk

'Oldest' Gresley loco running again in 150th anniversary year

By Robin Jones

THE sole-remaining and oldest-surviving locomotive tank engine designed by Sir Nigel Gresley has made its first movements in eight years in the build-up to celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the celebrated Chief Mechanical Engineer.

In April, the boiler successfully completed its re-hydraulic test to 255 psi – 1.5 times its safe working pressure, witnessed by boiler inspector Andy Wright of independent engineering inspection company BTIS, who expressed complete satisfaction with the result.

Then, on May 12, N2 0-6-2T No. 1744 was successfully steamed at the North Norfolk Railway's workshops in Weybourne for the first time since late 2018, making several light engine movements around the yard.

The Weybourne overhaul has involved extensive mechanical and boiler work such as new driving wheel and pony truck tyres, new front boiler ring and tubeplate, new firebox wrapper sections, and the manufacture of superheater tubes, with the total cost now approaching £800,000.

The NNR agreed to complete the overhaul in return for operational use of the locomotive, which is on course to return in mid-July following the final and second part of the boiler examination (which was passed on May 20), any remaining final assembly work, and finishing off in the GNR livery.

The N2 Overhaul Completion Club, launched to raise the final £100,000 needed, has now passed £56,000, with 45 subscribers. The club offers benefits for those contributing £1000 each (payable in up to eight instalments), including a signed certificate, exclusive visits to the locomotive under overhaul, priority tickets on its first trains, a limited-edition print by Matthew Cousins, and one year's free membership of The Gresley Society, which bought No. 1744 for preservation in 1963.

Society chairman Philip Benham MBE said: "The successful steaming and light engine movements mark another major step forward in returning No. 1744 to traffic. We remain grateful to the North Norfolk Railway and all those supporting the project.

"With The N2 Overhaul Completion Club now well over halfway to its target, we urge LNER enthusiasts to join us so that this unique Gresley tank engine can once again haul trains – including the Midland & Great Northern Society's Gresley Quad-Art carriages – on the NNR in Sir Nigel Gresley's 150th anniversary year."

Details of how to join overhaul completion club are available at www.gresley.org

N2 0-6-2T No. 1744 and its crew after light engine runs in Weybourne yard on May 12. GRESLEY SOCIETY

Austerities' ownership changes guarantee their Dean Forest future

By Owen Hayward

TWO Hunslet 0-6-0STs on the Dean Forest Railway have recently changed hands – but their future on the line remains secure.

No. 3806 has now seen full ownership pass to the DFR Society, while No. 3823 has been acquired by an undisclosed supporter.

No. 3806 was delivered to the National Coal Board in 1953, but records of its working life are scant, aside from the fact that it worked at one colliery in Staffordshire before being retired at Rugeley Colliery. Preserved by the DFRS in 1973 and arriving at Parkend in 1976, it was initially put on static display before moving to Norchard for restoration to commence two years later. Those who had bought the locomotive then exchanged their stake for shares in Forest of Dean Railway Ltd, which then made the Austerity the first locomotive to be owned by the railway itself.

In 1981, it was named *GB Keeling* after the first Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Severn & Wye Railway but was renamed in 1987 in tribute to the Rev Wilbert Awdry, author of the Thomas the Tank Engine stories and the DFR's president at the time. In 1994, the locomotive was immortalised in print by Wilbert's son, Christopher, who had taken over writing the books.

Wilbert has had several spells in operation, the most recent ending in 2016 when it was withdrawn in need of extensive boiler and firebox repairs.

In 2021, the DFRS acquired a 50% stake in the locomotive and in May 2026 purchased the remaining shares to take full ownership, with its overhaul currently a long-term ambition. In the meantime, a cosmetic restoration will be carried out which is being partially financed by model railway manufacturer Accurascale, which in turn is producing a limited-edition model of *Wilbert* in OO scale that has sold out to pre-orders. A percentage of the revenue is being donated to the DFRS to support the real-life example, which will then go on static display at Norchard.

DFRS chairman Tim McLennan said: "*Wilbert* is a key part of DFR history but has unfortunately been stored out of use for 10 years. While a full restoration to working order is going to be an expensive undertaking sometime in the future, we look forward to having the locomotive cosmetically restored and back on display for the public to enjoy."

On May 9, *Wilbert* (with its boiler recently returned to the frames) is shunted into the yard at Norchard after years hidden away in a siding. A cosmetic restoration will be conducted in 2027, after which it will go on static display. ADAM DICKINSON/DFRS

Fighting for the future

Warrior was also built for the NCB and ended its career at Bickerstaff Colliery at Leigh; prior to its move there in 1977, it was fitted with a Giesel ejector, and was also believed to have been renamed *Fred*. Diesel traction took over at the colliery from 1979, but steam was kept in reserve up until 1983, when *Warrior* was withdrawn and moved to the DFR. Despite restoration having begun, *Warrior* has not run in preservation and is stored as a kit of parts strewn across the railway. The sale to its new owner will see it enter the workshops for full restoration to begin in the near future, once other overhauls currently under way have been completed.

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Brand-new boiler for Darjeeling tank makes more progress at Boston Lodge

By Phil Marsh

THE Darjeeling Tank Locomotive Trust raised £300,000 in 100 days in 2023 to acquire the late Adrian Shooter's Sharp Stewart 1889-built 0-4-0SWTT No. 19B at auction on Midsummer's Day that year, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 308.

Trustees knew that No. 19B's boiler was in poor condition given its previous overhaul was at Tyseley Locomotive Works in 2004 and approaching the end of its 10-year ticket.

After a final day's operation at its new base at the Statfold Barn Railway on October 7, 2023, overhaul arrangements commenced.

The subsequent boiler inspection showed that while it could have been repaired, a new one was the best way forward – and so a further £130,000 had to be raised, and again, overly generous supporters were greatly assisted by Statfold Barn and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society.

The new boiler contract was won by the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge Works, which has experience in designing and manufacturing new boilers.

Once the design was signed off for insurance and by other safety authorities, materials were ordered – but delays outside the control of Boston Lodge and the 19B team were then experienced.

Works visit

On April 12, a private visit to Boston Lodge Works for supporters to view No. 19B's new boiler under construction was arranged by trust treasurer 'Fuzz' Jordan, who also arranged trips on the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways.

DTLT trustee and engineering lead Will Smith and works manager Jon Whalley, helped by works welder Bob Yates, led group discussions about the new boiler and its associated fittings, explaining the intricacies of its construction and how to fit the firebox to the boiler shell. The visit concluded with a tour of the works.

A few days after the visit, the initial cutting of the fire-door hole and trial-fitting of the dome was carried out. The inner firebox had also been trial-fitted into the firebox.

Trust chairman Jeremy Davey said: "The visit was hugely successful, enjoyed by our supporters and very much appreciated by everyone involved."

Fuzz is arranging a further supporters' visit, hopefully before the year's end, to see what should be a fairly compete boiler. He said: "We need to raise the final £10,000 to complete the overhaul. The boiler is paid for, but the final 2% of the total overhaul and reconstruction cost must still be raised."

➜ Donations can be made via www.darjeelingtank.org.uk

The 19B supporters at their private visit to Boston Lodge to see the new boiler. MICK MELBOURNE/DTLT

Above: The new boiler under construction with tube plate. MICK MELBOURNE/DTLT

Right: The new boiler and inner firebox. MICK MELBOURNE/DTLT

Cheers to that! Worth Valley takes on own pub

THE Keighley & Worth Valley Railway has bought its volunteers' favourite pub.

The Royal Oak in Haworth, which was once part of the Halifax-based Webster's Brewery chain, passed into private ownership before suddenly closing in 2024, leaving its future if doubt.

Following the purchase, the upper floor, which was used as living accommodation, will be converted to office space for the railway, while the downstairs bar reopened to the public on April 30.

Sam MacDougall, one of the volunteers involved in the KWVR's takeover of the trade and the pub's reopening, said: "Ever since our railway reopened in 1968, The Royal Oak was a favourite watering hole. We were all dismayed when it closed so suddenly. We see our railway as part of Haworth and the wider Worth Valley community. Reopening The Royal Oak as a community pub is our way of giving something back to the village that has supported us for so long."

The pub's snug bar, renowned for being decorated with railway photographs and other such memorabilia, had long been a local legend.

The Royal Oak, Haworth, a favourite hostelry with railway volunteers, staff and passengers, is now owned by the heritage line. KWVR

Moorsline's Bridge 42 reopens – but more repairs are needed

THE North Yorkshire Moors Railway's Grade II-listed Bridge 42 at Grosmont was scheduled to reopen on May 23 following essential restoration work to its stonework and arches.

As highlighted in *Heritage Railway* issue 342, an urgent appeal was launched to fund repairs to the bridge, which was built in 1846 to cross the River Murk Esk and is described as the line's hardest-working structure, supporting about 10,000 locomotive movements each year.

The bridge's reopening date had to be pushed back from the early May bank holiday weekend after it was discovered that more work needed to be done.

NYMR CEO Laura Strangeway said: "With complex work of this nature, it is not unusual for the schedule of work to be under constant review, and we are keeping our customers, volunteers and staff informed.

"After discussions with our engineering partners, we decided to move the publicised reopening date of Bridge 42 to May 23 and the full line from Pickering to Whitby will open on June 1, when our special Day Out With Thomas event (May 23-31) concludes.

Realistic timeframes

"The revised date reflects the additional work needed and provides a realistic timeframe within which to complete work to the required standard."

Following detailed inspections earlier this year, it was determined that temporary propping is necessary to guarantee safety and operational reliability until a full repair programme for Bridge 42 takes place in the closed season during the winter of 2026/27. This programme will restore the bridge to its long-term structural integrity and ensure its preservation for future generations.

The NYMR relies on its supporters to fund projects of the scale that require specialist materials, skilled contractors and careful working in a sensitive environment. To donate to the repair project, visit www.nymr.co.uk/bridge42

First Mixed Traction Day for legendary steam-only line

By Robin Jones

New-build replica Baldwin 2-4-2T No. 762 *Lyn* sharing passenger duties with Baguley Drewry 0-6-0DH *Pilton* at the Mixed Traction Day on May 17. LBR

***Pilton* with a restored original Lynton & Barnstaple Railway carriage.** LBR

Hunslet 0-4-0DH D6652 on duty for brake van rides at Woody Bay. LBR

THE Lynton & Barnstaple Railway held its first-ever Mixed Traction Day at Woody Bay on May 17.

The replica of 1898-built Baldwin 2-4-2T *Lyn*, constructed by Alan Keef Ltd in 2017, headed alternate passenger services with *Pilton*, the railway's 180hp 0-6-0DH constructed for the Drewry Car Co by EE Baguley of Burton-upon-Trent in 1952 to work in the canefields of Australia.

Pilton, No. 2393 of 1952, was exported to Victoria Mill in Queensland. Originally numbered D3, it was renamed *Leichhardt* in 1974 and was out of use by 1989.

In 1996, it was obtained by the Illawarra Light Railway Museum Society in Albion Park, New South Wales. Five years later, it was bought and repatriated by the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust and renamed *Pilton*.

Originally stored at Williton on the West Somerset Railway and then at Clutton in Bristol, in 2005 it went to Statfold Barn Railway, where it was completely rebuilt. As the original Gardner 8LW K type 150HP engine was deemed an uneconomic repair, a Cummins engine was installed.

During trial runs, the Cummins engine was found to be putting too much torque into the gearbox, primarily because of the continuous 1-in-50 gradient. It was decided to replace the Cummins with a Gardner 6LXB 180HP engine and also modify the cab to fit the L&BR loading gauge.

With the cab lowered and bodywork modified, L&B engineers completed the modifications required for it to run on the line.

At the event, Hunslet 0-4-0DH D6652, built in 1965 for the Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Dean Hill in Wiltshire, gave brake van rides in the station area.

When the depot closed in 2003, No. 6652 was briefly displayed at the Explosion museum in Gosport, from where it was purchased by the L&BR in August 2007, along with a box van, flat wagon and wooden-bodied brake van. Built to 2ft 6in gauge, all needed regauging before being used on the L&BR.

The locomotive is fitted with a 60hp four-cylinder Gardner 4LW diesel engine, connected to a torque convertor driving a single-speed Hunslet gearbox, with hydraulic clutches for forward and reverse. The final drive is by sprocket and chain. Also running around the station was the line's newest addition, 0-4-0 No. 001, built by Hunslet Hire Limited in 1996 as an exact copy of a Jenbacher Type DH25. In 1997, it underwent trials on the Abbey Light Railway in Leeds before returning to its manufacturer. In 1999, it was obtained by Sam Ward, who sold it to Alan Keef in 2004. Following a period in private ownership in Devon, No. 001 was bought by a group of L&B working volunteers.

The weather on the day was mixed, with sunshine alternating with showers and a cold wind, but the attendance compared well with a normal Sunday, said an L&B spokesman.

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Summer opening weekend for One:One Collection

A CELEBRATION of 100 years of the Isle of Thanet's stations will be held at an open weekend at Hornby Hobbies' Wonder Works and the One:One Collection.

The event in Westwood, Margate, on August 15/16, will be held in partnership with train operator Southern.

It will feature interactive displays, model railways, slot car racing, live music, more than 20 exhibitions and a chance to get up close to full-sized locomotives and half-scale classic cars. There will also be a creative play zone aimed specifically at children and displays from Hornby, Airfix, Scalextric, Corgi, Corgi Model Club, Warlord and Pocher.

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Oil-firing returns to Rheidol as converted *Omaha* completes first NYMR test run

By Owen Hayward and Robin Jones

Right: Rheidol 2-6-2T No. 9 *Prince of Wales* crosses the Afon Rheidol on April 30 shortly after departure from Aberystwyth with its first train in oil-firing conversion. VORR

THE conversion of one of the Vale of Rheidol Railway's GWR 2-6-2Ts to oil-firing was completed at just the right time. The locomotive pressed into service immediately after testing following a dry spring that saw steam temporarily replaced by diesel due to increased fire risk.

Last summer's prolonged hot weather also saw the VoRR steam fleet sidelined for several weeks through fear of starting lineside fires, along with more than 30 trains being cancelled and even one complete weekend of closure. It was announced that No. 9 *Prince of Wales* would be modified for oil-firing to ensure that steam could continue to operate through future dry spells in a move intended to provide operational resilience, allowing steam services to continue during periods when coal-firing presents an unacceptable risk.

Oil-firing is not a new feature to the railway; in 1978, the first of its fleet was converted to oil-firing in response to the dry summer of 1976, but by 2011, all three of the 2-6-2Ts had reverted to a traditional coal-firing set-up to prioritise authenticity and the visitor experience. However, recent years have seen extended periods of time without rain which, when coupled with hot and sunny weather, has led to tinder-dry landscapes which can, and have, catch fire because of hot sparks and embers emitted by locomotives burning coal.

There were also other factors considered in the decision: the closure of the Ffos-y-fran mine and the increasing reliance on imported coal has resulted in both higher costs and reduced fuel quality, with up to 30% more coal now required per round trip to Devil's Bridge. This has also increased fire risk, even with modern spark arresting and ashpan mitigation systems in place.

The overhaul of No. 9 was completed at Aberystwyth last autumn, which saw it appear at the VoRR's October 25/26 Steam Festival, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 339. During the winter months, it returned to the workshops for the conversion to take place, and its completion on April 30 saw it pressed into service that same afternoon.

Early fire risk

The day before, the railway had announced it was suspending steam operations and running services using diesel traction after dry and windy conditions resulted in significant local wildfires.

With No. 9 all but ready to go, a test run took place the following morning. The locomotive performed satisfactorily and was immediately pressed into service, hauling the 2pm departure from Aberystwyth to Devil's Bridge and back.

The conversion of No. 9 has been cleverly engineered to retain full reversibility. The equipment for oil-firing has been installed without altering the original coal-fired configuration, which means that the locomotive can be converted between the two methods within approximately one week. While this alternate method ensures that the railway can continue to run steam all year round, it does come with an added cost. The railway estimates that its coal consumption equates to about £125 per train, compared with oil, which is estimated to be between £240 and £300 per train depending on market conditions.

Vale of Rheidol CEO and chief engineer Llyr ap Iolo said: "Following the difficulties we experienced in 2025, it became clear that we needed greater flexibility in how we operate. Oil-firing allows us to significantly reduce the risk of lineside fires while maintaining a steam-hauled service.

"The ability to change the method of firing also gives us genuine operational choice. We can respond to weather conditions and fuel markets, rather than being constrained by them."

Alongside the oil conversion, the railway is also progressing the overhaul of its Bagnall 0-6-0DM No. 3124, which will provide an additional back-up option.

Omaha impresses on first run

Elsewhere, May 8 saw the first test run of USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 2253 *Omaha* on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway following its conversion to oil-firing.

As reported in issue 323, the 1943-built Baldwin, which was shipped to the UK to work on the LNER from its base at Neville Hill depot in Leeds and bought by the Polish State Railways after the Second World War ended, it returned to England in 1992 and in 2013 was bought by Pete Best, who has been awarded a British Empire Medal for his services to steam and heritage railways.

The NYMR engineering department has been assisted in the oil-firing conversion by FMW Solutions, a railroad contractor and consulting firm based in Duluth, Minnesota, which specialises in mechanical and engineering design and alternative fuel technology and research.

The Moorsline's aim is to improve its overall sustainability strategy, including reducing particulate emissions, and to boost resilience during hot weather periods, with UK sources for high-quality steam coal having dried up while sourcing coal from around the world is extremely expensive.

The light engine test run saw *Omaha* leave Grosmont MPD for the first time since the oil-firing conversion for a trip to Levisham. A delighted Paul Middleton, director of mechanical engineering at the NYMR, said its performance was "absolutely superb."

"I can't say anything else," he added. "It performs exactly as we expected it to, with a super-clean burner and all the controls operate effortlessly: you are in complete control of that boiler."

The railway's longer-term plan includes the conversion of WD Austerity 2-10-0 No. 3672 *Dame Vera Lynn* to oil-firing.

Omaha then went on to make its public debut on May 24, when it was rostered to haul the NYMR's 'Moorlander' dining service, during which it was reported to be performing well.

Above: The oil-firing equipment for No. 9's firebox prior to its installation at Aberystwyth. VORR

Right: USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 2253 *Omaha* on its first oil-first test run. NYMR

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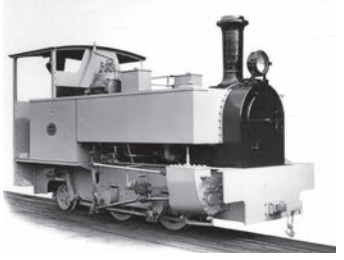
Statfold pioneers oil-firing technology with repatriated pannier tank

A HUNSLET 0-4-2 pannier tank which has been converted to oil-firing will make its debut at the Statfold Barn Railway's June 6/7 Summer Spectacle of Steam Weekend.

Originally constructed by Hunslet Engine Company for Fyffes and the Cameroon Development Corporation, No. 3756 of 1952 was one of a batch of four locomotives produced to an earlier Kerr Stuart design known as Tamar and is basically a panner tank version of the Brazil class.

No. 3756 arrived at Statfold in 2017 after spending several years on display at a banana plantation in Cameroon. As part of an extensive restoration programme, the locomotive has been converted to oil-firing using 21st-century steam technology developed by FMW Solutions. The conversion enables the locomotive to act as a test bed for a variety of fuel oils, including sustainable organic oils.



A works photograph of Hunslet 0-4-2PT No. 3756 of 1952. SBR

Graham Lee in the cab of the oil-firing converted Hunslet pannier. SBR

Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust chairman Graham Lee said: "It was important for our trust to ensure that our locomotives continue to run for generations to come, and it was felt that oil-firing was the way forward. We could have used older oil-firing technology, but with the guidance of FMW Solutions, we believed we could bring 21st-century technology to increase the efficiency of the oil burners and ideally utilise organic waste oil."

Tickets for the event can be purchased at www.statfold.com/spectale-of-steam

Youngest-ever crew at Bodmin line

Pictured during the Bodmin Railway's April 25/26 Spring Diesel Gala is the line's youngest-ever crew to take out a service train. Left to right are 18-year-old guard Jack House, Patrick Hooper, aged 29, the secondman, and Mat Simpson, 23, the driver; their average age is just 23. Patrick is also a qualified steam fireman. Class 08 No. 08444 has just run round its train at Boscarne Junction before heading back to Bodmin General. The Bodmin Railway has a reputation for recruiting and encouraging teenage volunteers. EVA WHITLOCK (AGED 17)/BR

A unique Duke of Cornwall double – one firmly on land and the other, a Leonardo AW169 helicopter, in the sky. LVR

Lappa Valley takes to the skies!

By Robin Jones

THE Lappa Valley Railway has repainted one of its locomotives in honour of the Cornwall Air Ambulance.

Earlier this year, the LVR team visited the helicopter emergency medical service charity's base at a hangar at Newquay Airport and saw that one of its two lifesaving helicopters is named *Duke of Cornwall*.

The St Newlyn East attraction's 10¼in gauge 4-4wPH carries the same name.

Year-long partnership

It was decided to repaint the locomotive in the striking red and yellow livery of the air ambulance, serving as a powerful symbol of the line's Charity of the Year partnership. The in-house repainting exercise took six weeks.

LVR operations director Ben Harding said: "It was clear from our recent charity day that our visitors have a deep affection for Cornwall Air Ambulance.

"*Duke of Cornwall* holds a special place in the hearts of so many, and for it to take on an important role in these famous colours is a fantastic way to keep Cornwall Air Ambulance's mission at the forefront of people's minds throughout our 2026 season."

Built in 1981 by Severn Lamb, the locomotive originally served thousands of families at the Carlyon Bay Railway before relocating to the LVR in the mid-1990s.

It was the original and sole engine for the Newlyn Downs branch line from its opening in 1995 and is fondly remembered by generations of visitors.

Raising awareness

While the locomotive remains officially out of regular service pending a full mechanical overhaul, its new role is to raise vital awareness for the charity, which must raise more than £9 million this year to keep its helicopters flying.

It receives no direct government funding and relies on the generosity of the public to maintain its life-saving service.

The locomotive is now on static display at the entrance to East Wheal Rose, the main leisure park, where it welcomes visitors alongside informational boards detailing both the history of the locomotive and the critical work of the air ambulance, which provides critical care in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, responding to about 1000 missions during its 365-day, 19-hours-a-day service.

Lappa Valley was named Railway Of The Year in the Heritage Railway Association Awards 2025 for excellence and innovation in its operations.

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Appeal to buy Northamptonshire steelworks loco succeeds

THE Northampton & Lamport Railway's operating company, Northampton Steam Railway Ltd, has completed the purchase of Hawthorn Leslie 0-6-0ST No. 3837 following a successful public fundraising appeal.

The appeal was launched in mid-March with a target of raising £9000 to cover the purchase price, as well as an initial cosmetic overhaul of the locomotive to enable its public display.

It has not steamed in preservation and was last year moved to the NLR for temporary storage. It will first undergo a cosmetic restoration, which is hoped to be completed in time for the NLR's 30th Anniversary Gala during the August Bank Holiday weekend, with a full restoration to follow in the future.

Anyone interested in volunteering with the project or railway is invited to email volunteer@nlr.org.uk

First passenger trips to Sharpness in 62 years

By Robin Jones

THE first public services to Sharpness in 62 years will be run by the Vale of Berkeley Railway to mark the 150th anniversary of passenger trains on the Gloucestershire branch.

The VoBR is staging Return to Sharpness over the normally freight-only line on Friday, July 31 and the weekend of August 1/2, with six return trips each day.

Class 143 Pacer No. 143603 will run the special services to Sharpness. VOBR

VOBR VALE OF BERKELEY RAILWAY RETURN TO SHARPNESS Celebrating 150 years of passenger travel to Sharpness

It was on August 1, 1876, that the first passenger trains ran to Sharpness. Passenger traffic ceased in October 1964 following the Beeching era cutbacks.

The eight-mile return trip on board the VoBR's Class 143 Pacer No. 143603, formerly part of the Great Western Railway fleet, will run from the heritage line's base at Oldminster Sidings, past the site of the former Berkeley station and on towards Berkeley Road junction. During the trip, a guide will tell the story of the branch and the Pacers.

As an extra attraction at Oldminster Sidings, there is a chance to enjoy Driver for a Fiver experiences on the line's Hibberd Planet 0-4-0 diesel shunter No. 3947.

The VoBR has organised a free return bus service from Cam & Dursley station exclusively for Return to Sharpness ticket-holders, which will take passengers the short journey to and from the sidings. Free parking will be available at Sharpness Sports and Social Club.

A VoBR exhibition will explore the history of the Sharpness branch, and food and drink will be available from the club throughout the day.

Tickets must be pre-booked via the Vale of Berkeley Railway's website, which has full details including the train and bus timetables: www.vobr.org.uk

Formed in 2015, the VoBR is a charity focused on educating the public about the Sharpness branch, its role in serving Sharpness Docks, and how it helped shape the local community.

Originally based in the old dock railway's diesel shed, the VoBR moved to Oldminster Sidings in 2025. Entirely volunteer-run, in the last year it has rapidly established new facilities, received its Office of Rail and Road licence to operate, and is now set to achieve its long-held aim of running its trains on the Sharpness branch line. New members and volunteers are always welcome.

Ivatt running again on East Somerset after 10-year overhaul

By Robin Jones

THE overhaul of Ivatt 2MT 2-6-0 No. 46447 has been completed on time at the East Somerset Railway.

Built in Crewe in 1950, No. 46447 was withdrawn in December 1966 and sent to Woodham Brothers of Barry for scrap. Bought by the Ivatt Locomotive Trust and moved to the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre in June 1972, the trust decided in 2008 to transfer it to the Isle of Wight Steam Railway pending restoration as a static exhibit.

In 2012, it was moved to the ESR's Cranmore base to be restored to running order and hauled its first passenger train in preservation on October 26, 2014, at the start of a 10-year long-term loan.

At the end of October 2024, No. 56447 was taken out of service for overhaul. It was stripped to the point of being able to lift the boiler and lift the frames off the wheels of the locomotive, as well as the tender off its wheels – and done on the same day that contract-overhaul GWR 2-8-0T No. 4247's completed boiler was lifted back into the frames. Once No. 4247 was complete and in service on the Dartmouth Steam Railway in May 2025, efforts could focus on No. 46447, with most of the stripping being complete, enabling the overhaul to effectively take place over just 12 months.

Back in action on time: Ivatt 2MT 2-6-0 No. 46447 at Cranmore on May 16. ESR

Work on the boiler included the usual tubes and flues, along with some plug bosses in the backhead and a throatplate patch with new associated stays and rivets, the condition of the rest of the boiler still being in very good condition. With all the boiler fittings, copper pipework and boiler cladding, as well as many other bits being new from the 2012 restoration, the amount of work required was minimal. On the motion, the coupling rod bearings were all remetaled and the axlebox alignment adjusted. The tender tyres were also turned.

No. 46447 has been turned out in unlined BR black with late crest rather than its previous lined livery. It will now start another 10-year loan period at the ESR.

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Sure-footed: Ex-MoD Hunslet 0-6-0ST WD75008 *Swiftsure* runs round its train at the Kent & East Sussex Railway's Tenterden Town station on April 6. The 10½-mile heritage line has set its sights on success for a second consecutive year in a national lifestyle awards scheme. OWEN HAYWARD

KESR eyes up a repeat national award success

By Geoff Courtney

THE Kent & East Sussex Railway is one step away from competing in the final of the national Muddy Stilettos lifestyle awards for the second successive year. The prestigious awards scheme covers 21 categories in 35 counties, and the Tenterden-based heritage line is competing in the best family experience category.

Having come through a nomination and initial voting process, the railway went head-to-head in a public vote with nine other Kent attractions for the title of the county's best family experience in a poll that ended on May 26, with the result being announced on June 16. If the KESR is the winner, it will go through as category winner to the national finals, the results of which will be revealed in July. Derrick Bilsby, the railway's chairman, said: "The goal of everyone running our railway is to give each and every passenger an authentic, fun and memorable day out.

"It is wonderful to know that we are bringing that full heritage railway experience to a new generation who will love it and therefore cherish it as much as we do."

KESR visitor experience manager Heather Packham said that in the current challenging times, the heritage line was focusing its efforts on providing as much value for money as it could to ensure families continued to enjoy a day out with the railway.

"This includes initiatives such as a Kids Go Free offer during school holidays, additional activities at the stations and on the trains, and a local residents season ticket offer which allowed multiple trips for those living within local postcodes," she said.

Lottery grant for Parkend goods shed museum project

THE Dean Forest Railway Museum Trust has been awarded a substantial grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the development of its Goods to Parkend museum project.

Although the railway's museum is based at Norchard, this award of £216,000 will enable a sizeable expansion of the Parkend goods shed, enhancing the way in which the story of the village's tramroad and industrial heritage is shared with the railway's visitors. The grant will cover most of the project costs, supplemented by existing museum resources and support from Forest of Dean Railway Limited and the Dean Forest Railway Society, and it will also cover essential repairs to the original slate roof.

Society chairman Tim McLennan said: "This will see the goods shed become another jewel in the crown of Parkend station, offering more opportunities for our passengers to learn about the history and background of our railway and the wider area."

Christopher Hill, honorary curator of the museum, said that the railway has collected about 4000 artefacts, half of which are on display, but it was hoped that more can be shown, including a goods clerk's office with 19th-century paperwork, once the project is completed.

The trust gave special thanks to John Metherall for his long-term leadership of the project and to museum trustee and design lead Chris Bladon and consultant Dave Tucker for their contributions.

The goods shed at Parkend set to be given a second life as a museum. DFC

Dramatic turn for Donegal can show other lines the way!

By Hugh Dougherty

EVENTS at Donegal Railway Heritage Museum are taking a dramatic turn thanks to the museum winning 2000 Euro backing from Donegal County Council, Donegal County Museum and CreativeIrl to develop the use of drama in telling the stories behind its exhibits.

Maura Logue is working to develop a drama based on the County Donegal Railways and its life and times. The play will be mounted in coach No. 58, pictured behind her. CDRM

Taking the museum out into the community through the arts is a key part of the museum's 2026-2030 strategic plan, and manager Marty Gilroy said it is an innovative way of presenting the museum and the stories of the railways of Donegal to new audiences. "It's an approach that I feel more heritage railways and museums could adopt," he said. "I know some already are taking this approach alongside all of their usual activities and events, and the Keighley & Worth Valley and its connection to The Railway Children immediately comes to mind, as well as period re-enactment events across the sector, but I feel there's room for expansion in this important approach to making our story relevant to a wider public."

The museum is aiming at an August production in County Donegal Railways coach No. 58 during Irish National Heritage Week, with Maura Logue, of Dark Daughter Productions and Costume Hire, developing the drama. She is already researching the human stories behind the displays at the museum and contacting people with memories of the railway to inspire her to write the script.

Meanwhile, staff member Niamh Coughlan, who also runs Donegal Town Walking Tours, has been organising a series of events at the museum to show visitors how a lady would have dressed to travel on the trains that arrived in Donegal when the station opened in 1889.

"Again, it's about using the arts and costumes to bring the past and our railway story to life," said Marty.

"The events have been very popular and are a new approach for us, which we will develop to cover other periods illustrating the lifetime of the railway.

"Using drama and the arts is a whole new way of working and is paying dividends in making us more widely known and more visible in the community. It's an approach that I'd highly recommend to any heritage lines and railway museums that haven't adopted it already."

Back to the past with costume drama at Donegal Railway Heritage Museum. CDRM

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Robin Jones

Editor

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Rail 'first' takes starring role at Swanage's diesel festival

By Robin Jones
Pictures by Andrew PM Wright

A NEW freight locomotive hauled its first passenger train in the UK when it appeared at the Swanage Railway's annual Diesel Gala and Beer Festival on May 8-10.

Class 99 hybrid-powered dual-mode diesel and electric Co-Co No. 99004 is one of a class of 30 built by Stadler in Valencia, Spain, to replace Beacon Rail and GB Railfreight's Class 66s.

The Class 99s are designed to haul freight trains on both electrified and non-electrified lines as speeds of up to 75mph with a maximum tractive effort of up to 110,000lb and a power rating of 8270hp in electric mode, greater than that of the diesel-powered 66s, and aims to cut CO2 emissions by 50%. The type is yet to enter service on the national network, although one example, No. 99001, was displayed at Alstom's multiple award-winning The Greatest Gathering event at Derby last August.

In July last year, operator GBRf reached an agreement with Belmond to introduce 99s from 2027 to haul the luxury 'Royal Scotsman' and 'Britannic Explorer' trains, replacing the current 66 fleet. They will be maintained by Stadler at a new facility in Leicester.

At the Purbeck Line's gala, No. 99004 joined eight heritage diesels and 1966-built Class 438 4TC four-carriage push-pull set No. 428, courtesy of London Transport, which operated between the capital and Swanage in 1967-69 and between London and Weymouth in 1967-88 when the Bournemouth to Weymouth line was electrified.

The other visiting diesel locomotives were Class 20 No. 20066, courtesy of Shaun Wright; Class 26 No. 26007, courtesy of Victor Korzeniewicz; Class 33 No. 33025, from West Coast Railways; Class 37 No. 37607, courtesy of Swietelsky; Class 58 No. 58023 *Leicester Depot,* courtesy of Ed Stevenson; and GB Railfreight Class 73 No. 73141, which was named *Spa Valley Railway* in 2022.

Also appearing was home-based Class 33 D6515 *Lt Jenny Lewis RN,* which hauled the last train through Broadstone to Wimborne after BR closed the line to freight in May 1977.

With seven locomotives arriving via the national network, the gala featured an intensive three-train service, with most trains operating along the entire length of the nine-mile heritage line past Norden park-and-ride station and beyond Furzebrook to the River Frome, within sight of Wareham.

Breaking fresh ground for the entire railway industry: Class 99 No. 99004 arrives at Swanage with a passenger service on May 9.

The successful beer festival in Corfe Castle station goods yard had 40 Dorset ales and 10 ciders on offer. On the Friday and Saturday evenings, a Beerex train conveyed visitors to and from the festival.

Swanage station hosted several trade stands selling a wide range of railway-related items and models, while GBRf sold railway memorabilia and train componentsin aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Organising team member and railway volunteer Dan Bennett said: "This year's diesel gala and beer festival was one of the most successful, and busiest, in the event's almost 20-year history.

"There was a very real buzz and excitement among the enthusiasts attending the event.

Medieval and very modern: Class 99 No. 99004 heads towards Swanage with Corfe Castle in the background on May 9.

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Right: A sweeping view from the cab of Class 99 No. 99004 of the entrance to Swanage station, with visiting West Coast Railways Class 33 No. 33025 to the left.

Below: Visiting Swietelsky Class 37 No. 37607 at Furzebrook.

Below right: Class 20 No. 20066 at Norden Gates level crossing.

"It was the first time that GB Railfreight's new, powerful Class 99 diesel and electric locomotive No. 004 hauled a passenger train in the UK, and the Swanage Railway was delighted and very grateful to host such a marvellous machine.

"The Class 99 looked fantastic, and enthusiasts were gathering around it all weekend.

"I would like to thank all those people who worked so hard to plan and deliver the event, as well as saying a big thank-you to everyone who attended and enjoyed the event in what was marvellous weather. It could not have been better." Wareham-based Dan is the deputy chairman of the Swanage Railway Trust and also a Swanage Railway Company director.

Swanage Railway CEO Abbie King said: "Our Diesel Gala and Beer Festival has been nothing short of phenomenal. We've welcomed record-breaking visitor numbers, seen incredible support from enthusiasts and families alike, and created an amazing atmosphere across the railway.

"Events like this are about far more than trains. They bring people together, support our local economy, and help secure the future of the Swanage Railway as we celebrate our 50th year. A huge thank-you goes to our volunteers, staff, visiting locomotive crews, traders and everyone who travelled to be part of it.

"So much work happens behind the scenes to deliver an event of this scale, and I'm incredibly proud of what the whole team has achieved together. The atmosphere has been absolutely outstanding."

➜ Anyone interested in volunteering on the Purbeck line should contact Kelly Griffin by emailing iwanttovolunteer@swanagerailway.co.uk or visit swanagerailwaytrust.org/volunteering

Above: GB Railfreight Class 73 No. 73141 *Spa Valley Railway* with the 4TC push-pull set at Corfe Castle station.

Left: Class 33 D6515 *Lt Jenny Lewis RN* passes Holme Lane.

Double grants for the KESR's community projects

THE Kent & East Sussex Railway has been awarded two grants by main line operator Southeastern's Customer and Community Improvement Fund, which targets social mobility and inequality.

Southeastern has just given £200,000 to 14 community projects in grants worth up to £50,000 as it deepens its commitment to the people and places it serves.

One of the grants to the KESR will create 10 wheelchair-accessible planters at Tenterden Town station, crafted by Tenterden Men's Shed and planted by local community groups.

The second grant will finance a volunteer recruitment event kit to recruit additional helpers ahead of the railway's planned extension to Robertsbridge in 2028, as featured last issue. The main line connection, on Southeastern's Hastings line, will help attract more visitors to this popular destination.

Southeastern community relations manager Matthew Fraser said: "We were bowled over by both the number and the quality of applications we received this year. We're proud to support initiatives that open up real opportunities for people who need them most."

Manor set for East Lancashire autumn gala

ODNEY Manor will swap the Somerset coast for the Manchester suburbs following the announcement that the GWR 4-6-0 had been booked for the East Lancashire Railway's autumn steam gala.

Taking place from October 16 to October 18, the visit will be something of a homecoming for No. 7828, which was a regular on the ELR between 1993 and 1995.

"More than 30 years later, we cannot wait to see and hear the bark of a Manor heading through the Irwell Valley once again," said a railway statement.

Tickets and further details will be announced soon.

Worksplate delight for steam enthusiast

By Geoff Courtney

RAILWAY enthusiast Trevor Gregg, the son of a 1950s BR Gateshead locomotive works fitter and himself a keen collector of memorabilia associated with the Northumberland mining industry, has cherished for more than two decades a worksplate he believed may have been from a Scottish-built steam locomotive.

However, curiosity recently got the better of him, and he set about trying to establish its true provenance, and although he soon found it was not from a locomotive, any disappointment faded when he discovered that it is believed to have come from a steam winding engine supplied to a Northumberland colliery for transferring miners down to the coal face.

To enhance his delight, the pit, Woodhorn Colliery, near Ashington, which closed in February 1981, has been converted into a museum, and although the winding engine has been scrapped, Trevor has donated the plate to the venue, which plans to display it.

The plate, a Grant, Ritchie & Co example, is dated 1900 and carries works No. 367. The company built 42 industrial steam locomotives between being established in 1876 and 1920, mainly for Scottish operators, although a few were supplied to customers south of the border, but no locomotives were built between works Nos. 362 and 387. Crucially for 75-year-old Northumberland-born Trevor, who now lives in Oldmedrum, Aberdeenshire, Grant, Ritchie & Co also built colliery winding gear, as he explained.

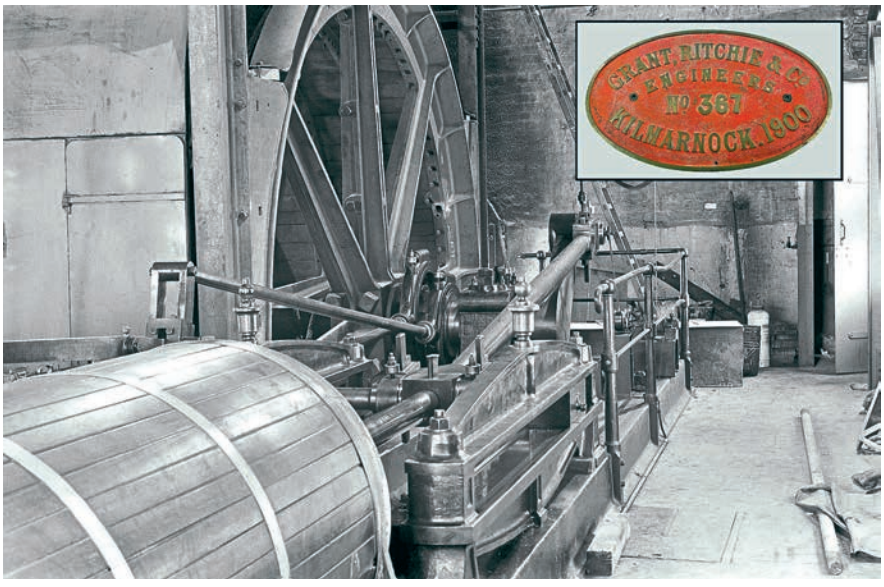
"The plate was given to me in 2002 by Penny Sewell following the death of her father, Ray, a friend of the family who held a number of senior engineering appointments with the National Coal Board in the Northumberland area, including colliery mechanical engineer. Penny knew I was a steam locomotive enthusiast and that her father would have liked me to have it.

"I tried to research the identity of the plate but couldn't find a steam locomotive supplied by Grant, Ritchie & Co with that number. With the help of a railway historian, it was identified as most likely having come from a steam shaft winding engine, and then, to use an appropriate phrase, the penny dropped.

"In 1900, the company delivered two steam winding engines to Woodhorn Colliery, and with that date on the plate, the name of Grant, Ritchie & Co, and it being in the possession of Penny's father, it must have come from a steam winder at Woodhorn Colliery."

Trevor found the two steam-powered winders gave good service: the first until 1969 before being replaced by an electric winder, while No. 2, which he believes was the winder that carried the Grant, Ritchie & Co plate, remained in operation for a further six years, until also being replaced by an electric winder. "This was the last steam-powered winder in the North East, and Ray probably asked for the plate before the winder was scrapped," said Trevor.

The colliery was closed in 1981, but the site was reopened as a museum in 1989 within the Queen Elizabeth II Country Park and the winding buildings survive, with No. 2 winding house currently being restored. A 2ft gauge railway of just over half a mile from the car park to the museum was opened in 1996 but closed in 2018, although volunteers are currently restoring it in a project that includes relaying the track.



Wind-up: The Woodhorn Colliery No. 2 steam winding engine photographed by mining enthusiast Trevor Gregg on July 11, 1975, a week before it ceased operating as the last steam-operated winder in the North East. Inset: The Grant, Ritchie & Co worksplate believed to have been fitted to the 1900-built winder. TREVOR GREGG

Coal train: Hunslet 1975-built 0-4-0DH *Black Diamond*, the nickname for coal, runs beside Queen Elizabeth II Country Park lake carrying visitors to Woodhorn Colliery Museum in March 1996, the month the line opened. The 2ft gauge line closed in 2018 and is currently being restored for reopening. TREVOR GREGG

➜ Tyne and Wear Metro operator Nexus has donated surplus materials from its renewal project at Whitley Bay Metro station to support the revival of this line. The donation includes 50 tonnes of concrete ballast blocks, 200 scaffolding boards, 40 timber posts and 54 sheets of plywood. Much of the material would otherwise have been sent to landfill, reflecting the Nexus approach to sustainability and social value. The donation follows an annual volunteer day in which members of the operator's track maintenance team helped install track at the railway.

Southampton tram makes first run after 77 years

By Robin Jones

A SOUTHAMPTON tram has run in the city for the first time in 77 years in a milestone for local transport history.

Tram 11 emerged from the workshop at the Solent Sky Museum, in Albert Road South, and ran a short distance on rails at 10.30am on May 9 as part of the venue's annual Vintage Tram Celebration weekend.

Crowds of visitors, photographers, transport enthusiasts and re-enactors in period dress watched the first time that a Southampton tram has been seen on tracks in the city since its network was scrapped in 1949.

While people gathered to witness the rare spectacle, model rail layouts and market stalls recreated the atmosphere of Southampton's tramway heyday.

Built in the 1920s, Tram 11 was withdrawn from service when the last routes closed in 1949. After years of meticulous restoration work by dedicated volunteers from the Southampton Tram Project – and following a successful reunion with its restored chassis in 2025 – it can now be seen in its original operating state.

Museum director Alan Jones said: "This is a massive milestone in the restoration project and for the history of Southampton. Moving Tram 11 out on tracks for the first time in 75 years is a powerful symbol of our commitment to preserving and celebrating Southampton's engineering legacy. This is a dream come true for our dedicated volunteers and for the city."

The event also saw model railway layouts and market stalls set to the backdrop of 20 vintage aircraft.

Southampton Tram 11 outside the Solent Sky Museum workshop. ROBERT STIDWORTHY

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Fresh hope for mothballed Tralee & Dingle Railway

By Hugh Doughety

HOPES that the mothballed 1.8-mile section of the 3ft gauge Tralee & Dingle Railway, linking Tralee's Aquadome and Blennerville Mill, might be resurrected after being closed in 2013 have been raised. An announcement has been made by Kerry County Council that a consultant has been appointed to look into the line's assets and possible future use.

The line uses the original trackbed of the Tralee & Dingle Light Railway, which ran from 1891 to 1953, and was opened by the former Tralee Urban District Council in 1993 using 2-6-2T No. 5T (works No. 552 of 1892) and two Portuguese carriages, altered from metre to Irish 3ft gauge.

Hunslet-built No. 5T ran on the T&DLR until it was transferred to the Cavan & Leitrim Railway in 1949 and ran there until the line's closure in 1959. It was then bought for preservation by Edgar Mead and displayed at Steamtown, in Vermont, USA, before being repatriated to Ireland in 1988 and brought to Tralee by a group of businessmen who saw the tourism potential of a revived section of one of Ireland's most characterful narrow gauge lines, which ran over fierce gradients and through epic scenery, 31 miles from Tralee to Dingle Town itself.

Thanks to council support and the ability to tap into employment and training funding, No. 5T was fully restored to working order and went into service between Tralee and Blennerville in 1993 to great publicity and acclaim.

However, in 2003, the locomotive's boiler needed repairs and the council balked at the cost, with services being maintained by a diesel locomotive until full closure in 2006. Since then, the line has remained derelict, with No. 5T stored in a partly-dismantled state in Blennerville shed and the carriages left in the open, suffering from water ingress and vandalism in equal measure.

Reopening push

Two local bodies have pushed for reopening. The Kerry Model Railway Association formed in 2013 with the express purpose of working to reopen the line, but that proved impossible with local government reorganisation and the continuing deterioration of the track. More recently, the Tralee & Dingle Railway Preservation Society has been pressuring Kerry County Council, the current owner of the railway, to allow it to work with the local authority towards reopening what the society says is a superb tourist attraction and a wonderful example of local railway heritage.

Society secretary Eddie Barrett said: "We've been keen to work with the council on reviving the railway and can offer volunteer involvement and commitment to get the trains back up and running and to keep them running for future generations.

"There is no doubt that the track needs to be completely relaid, while the carriages have been allowed to deteriorate. The council has not granted us to access the loco shed for the last seven years, so I can't accurately say what work would be needed on No. 5T to return the loco to steam, but given its state when we last saw it in 2019, it was then needing a great deal of restoration, but that would not be impossible.

"However, even if we started operations, initially with a diesel loco as a first step towards steam, that would be an enormous step forward, but our worry is that the consultant might recommend the abandonment of the railway and for the trackbed to be turned into a greenway. The society hopes that this is not the case."

Raising steam outside Blennerville shed is 5T in fine condition in July 1999. The Tralee & Dingle Railway Preservation Society would like to see such scenes revived. HUGH DOUGHERTY

Regional value

Kerry County Council confirmed only that a consultant has been appointed. County tourism manager Jon Clark told *Heritage Railway*: "Kerry County Council has recently appointed a consultant to carry out a condition survey and future use analysis of the old Tralee & Dingle Light Railway between Tralee Aquadome and Blennerville Windmill.

"The appointment includes a detailed survey and assessment of existing assets, examining and discussing options for repurposing the assets and evaluating the viability of one or several potential future uses."

With the consultant due to report back to the council in October, Eddie added: "I'm very active in the meantime, lobbying councillors on the benefits of reopening the railway, and I've been able to raise some support within the council, but fears remain for the future of the line.

"It would be a tragedy to see it disappear forever, so we have to hope that the consultant recognises the true value of the line."

Track to the shed: The track to the loco shed has been partly covered with tar. T&DRPS

One of the coaches shows signs of decay, including boarded up windows, lying outside at Blennerville. T&DRPS

More summer steam scheduled to run on Severn Valley Saturdays

THE Severn Valley Railway is set to run steam-hauled services operating on the first train of the day from Bridgnorth every Saturday in June, July and August.

The services will see one of the railway's smaller steam locomotives paired with a set of GWR carriages, replacing services that would usually be operated by a diesel or the DMU, giving more passengers the opportunity to travel behind steam from the northern end of the line during the busy summer season.

The carriage set will include GWR No. 4786, which was recently restored by volunteers at Bewdley and is celebrating its 100th year in service, as reported in issue 345. Visitor engagement manager Lewis Maddox said: "These special Saturday departures are all about celebrating what makes the SVR so unique.

"There is something very special about boarding a steam train at Bridgnorth behind a beautifully presented locomotive and travelling in some of our oldest and most historic carriages.

"There's demand from visitors who want to start their journey behind steam from Bridgnorth, particularly during the summer months when Shropshire welcomes so many tourists and day-trippers.

"These services give passengers more flexibility while also helping us maximise capacity on some of our busiest operating days."

Carrog in the early 1990s, before the heritage railway finally reached the station in 1996. DAVID TYRER/LR

GWR pannier tank No. 7754 at Carrog on April 12, 2026, less than a month under 30 years after heritage services returned to the station. OWEN HAYWARD

Could the Llangollen become your railway for a full day?

By Owen Hayward

THE Llangollen Railway has trialled a new full-day experience that could regularly see up to six individuals take control of the Denbighshire line for driving, firing and guarding journeys along part of the 10-mile line.

Following its regular footplate courses selling out for the year, the new steam driver experience course sees participants get to sample a full day of working trains through the scenic Dee Valley between Llangollen and Glyndyfrdwy, taking in a multitude of roles both at the front and rear of the train.

Starting early in the morning, they get to prepare one of the line's steam locomotives before venturing out onto the line to work a fully timetabled day.

Participants have a go at both driving and firing the locomotive, along with experiencing life as a guard, and highlights include making stops at Berwyn station (recently voted one of Britain's most picturesque heritage stations) and passing through the 689-yard tunnel which in February saw a £100,000 programme of essential track renewal work completed.

With multiple trips being run, there are plenty of opportunities for each person to have a go at all roles, with breakfast and lunch provided as part of the package, a tour of the MPD, and an introduction to traditional signalling in the 'boxes at each end of the trips.

LR volunteer and events planner Tim Hines said: "This is a truly special experience, and one we are incredibly proud to offer. It gives people the chance to do something very few ever achieve – not just see a steam locomotive, but actually be part of the crew that operates it. From lighting up in the morning to sharing meals together and running trains through the Dee Valley, it's a full, authentic day on the railway.

"The excitement, the teamwork and the atmosphere are something you simply can't replicate anywhere else."

LR Trust manager Dave Hennigan told *Heritage Railway* that the first event, which took place on June 1 and cost £1250 per person, was a trial to gauge interest, adding that if it proved successful, further dates would be added in due course.

He also confirmed that following the huge demand for places during the recent branch line gala (as covered last issue), footplate passes for rides aboard steam and diesel locomotives were being offered on dates throughout the rest of the year.

For future availability on all footplate experiences at the railway, visit llangollen-railway.co.uk/steam-driver-experience

Thirty years of Carrog

Meanwhile, on May 2, the LR celebrated the 30th anniversary of its heritage operations reaching Carrog station, which served as its primary Western terminus between 1996 and 2023, when the extension to Corwen was opened in full.

The station was formally opened by the late Gerald Grosvenor, 6th Duke of Westminster, and the late Bill Shakespeare, former LR president, on May 2, 1996, with students from Ysgol Carrog partaking in the ceremony. Exactly three decades later, the occasion was celebrated with pupils from the same school joining some of the volunteers who were involved in the efforts to bring the railway back to the station.

Although part of the station building is now a private dwelling, the LR still has use of the platforms, ticket hall and sidings. A team of volunteers have recently commenced efforts to tidy up the yard, with plans for future improvements currently being considered.

LRT chairman Bob Creasey said: "Carrog station is incredibly important to the railway, both operationally and as part of the community we serve. While many people know it for transforming into a magical Lapland setting during our Santa specials and Sion Corn trains, it is also a vital station for the communities of Carrog and Llidiart y Parc.

"This anniversary was a chance to celebrate not just 30 years since reopening, but also the role the station continues to play in connecting people, preserving our heritage, and bringing visitors into the Dee Valley."

Ian Lebbon, chairman of the Denbighshire Destination Tourism Partnership, a director of the railway and a local resident, said: "As a resident of Carrog, I see first-hand how important the station and railway are. It is not only a vital part of our heritage, but it is also a key driver of tourism in the Dee Valley.

"The LR brings visitors from around the UK and beyond, supporting local businesses and helping to showcase everything that makes this area special. Celebrating 30 years since the station's reopening is a proud moment for Carrog and a chance to look ahead to a strong future for both the railway and our local economy."

Volunteers honoured

Further celebrations were also in order to mark 30 years of service by volunteers Wayne and Sue Ronneback, who have served as stationmaster and duty stationmaster respectively at Corwen since its reopening, becoming central figures in the line's success, with Wayne having been heavily involved in the project to reconnect the LR with the town. To recognise their incredible contribution, a special presentation took place, with the choir from Ysgol Carrog giving an extra performance in their honour.

The railway presented the couple with flowers as a token of appreciation for their years of service and dedication. In a typically generous gesture, Wayne then treated all of the children to ice creams.

"Wayne and Sue represent everything that is special about this railway," said Dave. "Their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm over the past 30 years have been nothing short of extraordinary. Between them, they have given thousands of hours to support the railway and the wider community. Sue's work coordinating our volunteer rosters is absolutely vital, while Wayne's leadership at Corwen inspires everyone around him. They are both hugely respected and valued by all of us."

Wayne (centre) and Sue Ronnebeck (right), who have been volunteering with the Llangollen Railway for 30 years this year, were recognised at a presentation held at Corwen station on May 2. OLIVER LANG/LR

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Kidderminster Town's flexibility is boosted thanks to the opening of station's newly-extended platform

By Robin Jones

Left: Kidderminster Town stationmaster Rob Jones cuts the ribbon for the new platform extension. KEITH WILKINSON

Below: The new platform in service as Stanier Mogul No. 13268 departs with the 10.15am from Kidderminster Town station on May 7. KEITH WILKINSON

A LONG-held ambition to extend the platform at the Severn Valley Railway's Kidderminster Town terminus has been realised.

The platform has been lengthened by 65 yards, allowing a full nine-coach train and locomotive to stand in the run-round position. This not only improves operational flexibility, but it also brings visitors closer to the action while still meeting evolving safety standards.

The extension was officially opened on May 7 during a ceremony attended by volunteers and staff, whose dedication ensured the project's successful completion.

Project manager Antony Bartlam said: "What began as a straightforward extension quickly developed into a complex engineering challenge.

"The existing track alignment on Platform 2, set on a tight radius, required careful repositioning while retaining original points to control costs.

"Additional works included carefully positioning the former Radyr bracket signal, moving the barrow crossing, and regrading the access road to the TMD."

The scheme has involved significant construction work, including using reinforced block walls filled with about 400 cubic metres of material and the installation of hundreds of edging blocks and coping stones, many reclaimed from across the railway.

SVR managing director Gus Dunster said: "Our sincere thanks go to everyone involved for their hard work and support. This wonderful achievement now opens the way for another ambitious project at Kidderminster. With a longer platform in place, the time has come to complete Kidderminster Town station as it was always intended to be.

"Very soon we will launch a major fundraising campaign to pay for the construction of a stunning GWR-style platform canopy.

"This will protect our visitors and give them a welcome worthy of the SVR's gateway station, using a combination of reclaimed steelwork and newly manufactured components."

Kidderminster Town is the busiest of the SVR's six stations, welcoming about 80% of its visitors. Maintaining the appearance today of a station from more than a century ago, it was constructed in the mid-1980s to an authentic GWR design.

Duchess of Hamilton depicted on latest issue of £2 coin

By Robin Jones

THE National Railway Museum has partnered with The Royal Mint to release a commemorative £2 coin featuring streamlined LMS Pacific No. 6229 *Duchess of Hamilton*.

Built in Crewe in 1938 to haul express services between London and Glasgow on the West Coast Main Line, the locomotive was selected to represent Britain at the New York World's Fair, where it was temporarily renamed *Coronation* and adapted for US regulations with the addition of a bell, headlight and cowcatcher.

Returning to Britain in 1942, its streamlined casing was removed to simplify maintenance, and its red and gold livery was replaced with wartime black. Following Nationalisation in 1948, the locomotive was renumbered to 46229 and remained in service until 1964, before being saved from scrapping by entrepreneur Billy Butlin and displayed at his holiday park in Minehead. It became part of the National Railway Museum's collection in 1976, restored to its streamlined form, and is now displayed in the York venue.

Artist Gary Breeze designed the coin's reverse, which features a side-on depiction of the 4-6-2 in motion, capturing its streamlined form.

The coin has been released in a range of editions, including Gold Proof, silver Proof Colour, Brilliant Uncirculated Colour and Brilliant Uncirculated. Each edition is accompanied by illustrated packaging that explores the locomotive's engineering significance and cultural impact.

"*Duchess of Hamilton* is one of Britain's most extraordinary locomotives and a true icon of speed, elegance and engineering ambition," said Phillippa Green, licensing and partnerships manager at The Royal Mint. It is a privilege to work with the NRM to bring this remarkable machine to an official UK £2 coin for the very first time.

The Brilliant Uncirculated version of the £2 Duchess of Hamilton coin. ROYAL MINT

"Gary Breeze's design captures the locomotive's streamlined beauty with real artistry, and we hope the release will resonate not only with coin collectors, but also with all those who share a passion for Britain's rich railway heritage."

Amy Harbour, head of licensing and commercial partnerships at the NRM, added: "Working with The Royal Mint has been a fantastic partnership. Together, we've created something that feels authentic to the locomotive's legacy while offering collectors and enthusiasts a meaningful way to connect with its story."

Prices for the £2 coin start from £17.50; visit www.royalmint.com

BR Standard pair head for Aviemore in Bo'ness and Moorsline moves

By Owen Hayward

No. 76079 will be swapping the Yorkshire Moors for the Cairgorns after being sold by the North Yorkshire Moors Railway to the Strathspey Railway, where it will be overhauled and returned to steam. ANDREW JEFFERY/NYMR

THE Strathspey Railway's steam fleet has recently gained two new BR Standard 4MTs, one arriving for repairs while another has been bought by the line.

Last operational in 2023, mogul No. 76079 was offered for sale by the North Yorkshire Moors Railway in autumn 2024 in need of extensive and expensive repairs before it can run again. That list includes a new copper tubeplate, the reason for its withdrawal from service despite still having a year left on its boiler certification.

Built at Horwich in 1957, it was one of five to be based at Sutton Oak depot in St Helens, the quintet working heavy freight services and some local services to Warrington and Chester. Its working life was relatively short and it was withdrawn by BR in December 1967, by which time it had moved to Wigan Springs.

Saved from scrap in 1974 and initially taken to Steamport Southpart, where it went on static display, it was later bought by Riley & Sons Ltd, which restored the locomotive and ran it on the main line – the only example of its type to have done so in preservation to date.

During its time under Ian Riley's ownership, it was hired by the NYMR to run the main line section between Grosmont and Whitby. It transpired to be well-suited to this and gained the nickname 'Pocket Rocket.' The NYMR later bought No. 76079 from Ian and it became a permanent resident of the Moorsline.

An overhaul was completed in 2014, but flue issues in 2023 led to its early withdrawal, with other substantial work known to be required before it can run again.

Following a period of careful consideration, the NYMR's board concluded that the locomotive's long-term future would be best served by a new custodian, with the capacity and commitment to undertake the major works required resulting in its sale to the Strathspey, which has acquired No. 76079 with precisely that intention – to give it the comprehensive overhaul it deserves and a new operational home.

NYMR chief executive Laura Strangeway said: "No. 76079 has given outstanding service over many seasons and has earned a special place in the affections of our staff, volunteers and visitors alike.

"While it is naturally a moment of reflection to see it leave Pickering, we are delighted that it is going to a railway that shares our values and is genuinely committed to its restoration. The Strathspey Railway will provide a fitting new home."

Strathspey managing director Gordon Kirk said: "The purchase forms part of the railway's long-term operational and engineering strategy. At present, the Strathspey Railway owns one operational steam locomotive, Ivatt Class 2 No. 46512, while also relying on hired locomotives to maintain services.

"With major overhauls scheduled for existing locomotives later this decade, it is important that we strengthen our fleet to ensure the continued operation of steam services in Aviemore and the Cairngorms."

The sale forms part of the NYMR's ongoing fleet strategy, ensuring that the line's resources are focused on the locomotives best matched to its operational requirements while securing positive futures for engines whose long-term place lies elsewhere. Proceeds from the sale will be reinvested in the NYMR's heritage fleet and infrastructure."

No. 80105 has moved from Bo'ness to Aviemore for repairs to be carried out, following which it will remain on the Strathspey for five years CHRISTOPHER PATON

Tanks for the future

Meanwhile, 2-6-4T No. 80105 has already arrived at Aviemore after moving from the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway on May 7.

Preserved by the Locomotive Owners' Group (Scotland) Ltd in 1973, it was stopped at the end of 2025 in need of urgent firebox repairs.

Repair options were investigated, and a move to a line further south was considered; however, it was decided that the Strathspey's workshops presented the best opportunity to see the locomotive returned in a timely manner. In exchange for the necessary work, No. 80105 will spend five years running on the SR before returning to Bo'ness.

This will no doubt prove invaluable to the SR; at present, Caledonian Railway 812 class 0-6-0 No. 828 is on an extended loan to the Spa Valley Railway, with little work available for it at its usual home. The operational fleet remaining in Scotland comprises BR Ivatt 2MT Nos. 46512 and 46464, along with LMS 'Black Five' No. 5025. Of the two 2-6-0s, the former saw its last overhaul completed in 2021, with the Stanier 4-6-0 completed the same year, and so both of these locomotives are about halfway through their 10-year boiler certification. No. 46464, meanwhile, returned to steam in 2024 and should run until the mid-2030s (subject to the usual caveats). Having No. 80105 available will provide resilience and provide an additional locomotive to help operate services when the Ivatt may have otherwise been left alone.

Also in the SR's workshops is Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns-built 0-6-0ST Austerity No. 7097 of 1943 (NCB No. 9), currently undergoing overhaul. It arrived on the Strathspey in 1976 but has not run since the late 2000s. Work commenced in 2020, but the firebox has required serious attention to rectify previous repair attempts.

It is intended to outshop the locomotive as it appeared when allocated to NCB Backworth Colliery in the early 1970s.

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Latest S&DR celebration sees Yarm 'windows' mural completed with thanks to local creatives

By Robin Jones

A NEW artwork outlining the story of the Stockton & Darlington Railway has been revealed.

The piece in West Street is one of a series commissioned as part of the S&DR200 Festival.

Designed by local artists Abby and Owen, it faces the railway viaduct in West Street car park and comprises eight panels which depict the emergence of steam power and its contribution to the industrial revolution of the 19th century. They also link the railway story to the natural world, referring to the ways in which trains contributed to the scattering of seeds and pollinators along rail corridors and via the rivers they crossed.

The panels include the themes of stepping into our history; building a bridge to new horizons; creating real possibility; united we move forward; people brought together: a story of innovation; a moment of arrival; a future in pollination.

The mural is intended to leave a lasting legacy for residents and visitors to enjoy, and complements the recent installation of Head Wrightson 0-4-0VBT 'Coffee Pot' No. 21 at Teesdale Business Park (see separate story).

The engine's prominent positioning between the Infinity Bridge and the Millennium Footbridge establishes a heritage landmark location which showcases Stockton-on-Tees's cultural identity and is another means of celebrating the borough's engineering and railway heritage.

Set to arrive on Stockton Riverside in the coming weeks will be a three-metre-tall solar-powered illuminated sculpture which will mark S&DR's legacy, its connection to the community, and the importance of light in the safe movement of people and wagons. The final piece in the S&DR bicentenary celebrations, it will be installed where the original railway ran down to the dockside in the early 19th century.

Coun Nigel Cooke, cabinet member for environment, leisure and culture at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, said: "The mural at West Street is a permanent reminder of the importance of the North East region and our borough's role in making history. It's a beautiful representation of the stories behind the railways and really gets over the impact S&DR had on so many aspects of life – from technology, industrialisation, trade, and even nature. "

Reuben Kench, chairman of the Stockton & Darlington Rail Heritage Partnership, said: "The S&DR200 Festival, taking place over 12 months throughout Stockton, Darlington and County Durham, has attracted millions of viewers and involved thousands of participants.

"It's been a great pleasure to work with the artists, engineers and historians who have helped us deliver a fitting tribute to the ingenuity and determination of the original creators of the S&DR. The creativity and pride are obvious in the approach of Abby and Owen, whose mural is a rich and evocative representation of the multi-faceted story."

In front of the new mural at West Street car park in Yarm are, from left, Coun Nigel Cooke, Reuben Kench, artists Abby and Owen, and ward councillors John Coulson and Andrew Sherris. STUART BOULTON/STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Abby and Owen said: "As working-class creatives from Stockton-on-Tees with a love of railway poster art, it has been a huge honour to create a permanent piece of public art celebrating a story rooted in our own local heritage and our DNA as artists.

"This mural has allowed us to explore the story on a much bigger scale and is the result of six months of research, sketching and planning.

"The S&DR's 200-year legacy is an inspiring story of people, connection, collaboration, innovation and so much more. We wanted the mural to feel like a series of windows into that remarkable human story, inviting people to pause, look closer, and connect with this story that they too are a part of.

"We are so grateful to have been asked to create these pieces and hope the artwork brings joy, pride, and a sense of connection to residents and visitors for years to come."

Come around to Teesdale for a Coffee (Pot) at old works

By Owen Hayward

ONE of just three known surviving Head Wrightson & Co locomotives has been relocated for static display on a specially constructed plinth close to where it was built more than 150 years ago.

Emerging from the builder's Thornaby works in 1870 for the Londonderry Railway and used at Seaham Harbour in County Durham, 0-4-0VBT 'Coffee Pot' (works No. 21) became the company's No. 16, with sister locomotive works No. 33 renumbered as 17. Their low height meant they proved an ideal choice for the clearances were limited, along with corners that proved too tight for other four-coupled locomotives.

Withdrawn in 1959, No. 16 has not steamed since, although it did receive a restoration at the hands of Head Wrightson apprentices in the 1960s. Having spent years on display at Beamish and also in Preston Park in Thornaby, last September it was announced that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council had approved planning permission to construct a plinth for No. 16 in Teesdale Business Park, where the workshops that built the locomotive in 1870 were once sited.

Late on March 26, the cosmetically restored locomotive was carefully lowered into place on a roundabout between Infinity Bridge and the Millennium Footbridge.

Coun Nigel Cooke, cabinet member for environment, leisure and culture at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, said: "The installation of the Head Wrightson locomotive is one of the final pieces in the S&DR200 celebrations and another way we can proudly celebrate the Borough's engineering and railway heritage.

"We chose this prominent new location so the engine sits within the former Head Wrightson site, highlighting Stockton-on-Tees's wider engineering achievements and strengthening its connection to our Stockton and Darlington Railway story.

On March 26, Head Wrightson & Co 'Coffee Pot' No. 16 is lowered onto its display plinth in Teesdale Business Park. STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

"Thanks to expert preservation from professionals, including colleagues at Beamish, we will continue to maintain it as best we can using specialist protective paints and oils to conserve it for generations to come. The installation will also create a distinctive gateway landmark within Teesdale Business Park, reinforcing Teesdale's identity as both a modern business district and a historically significant engineering site."

Blackpool's Tramtown condemned – but heritage fleet will run again

By Owen Hayward

THE future for Blackpool's iconic heritage trams looked uncertain in April when it was announced that the museum at Rigby Road was to be permanently closed; however, the retention of these vintage vehicles and their operation along the promenade remains a part of local vision, with new plans under development to see them return to operation this summer.

The Rigby Road depot opened in 1935 with capacity to house 108 trams. In 2014, the Tramtown visitor experience opened in the former fitting shop shed on the site, allowing the public to see some of the stored members of the heritage fleet and restoration work taking place. The building's condition in recent years has deteriorated extensively, however, resulting in what was hoped to be a temporary closure at the start of the year. Following an inspection of the engineering complex, which also contains the paint and bodywork shops that have already been out-of-bounds for some years, it was initially decided that major electrical work was required before it could reopen, with £50,000 provisionally awarded by Blackpool South MP Chirs Webb from the Pride of Place fund.

Unfortunately, at a meeting in April between local councillor Paul Galley (who also served as Tramtown's volunteer coordinator), new Blackpool Transport managing director Lea Harrison and heritage operations manager Martin Gurr, Coun Galley learned that the building in which Tramtown resides is now fully condemned.

A view inside the Tramtown engineering workshop; the building has now been condemned. BLACKPOOL TRAMTOWN

"It was mooted that Tramtown could become a pop-up operation based around some other parts of Blackpool or Fleetwood," said Coun Galley in a YouTube video he published following the meeting. "It is the end of the line for Tramtown.

"I asked what the appetite was for Tramtown to become part of the Blackpool Heritage Museum Trust. Becoming part of a charity would bring enormous benefits for Tramtown and the wider Bloomfield Area. Sadly, there was no appetite for that to happen."

Lynn Williams MBE, Blackpool's councillor for Claremont, said: "The only public entrance is unsafe, and we can't gamble with the safety of volunteers and visitors by opening an unsafe building.

"Equally, bad weather ripped even more panels off the roof, which has led to it leaking again.

"We have looked to quickly and safely remove everything out of the building and find a place to store and preserve it, but there's no safe or affordable alternative but demolition.

"We appreciate this closure will be difficult for the Tramtown volunteers and for the people who care about our heritage and our trams, just as I do.

"I am determined that we work together as a town now to submit a joint funding bid to build back a better Tramtown visitor attraction that celebrates our wonderful historic trams."

Responding to the public outcry that followed the announcement, Lea said that revitalisation of heritage operations is one of his "top priorities," as well as finding a permanent home for an improved attraction.

"I would like to categorically state that this is not the end of the line for heritage trams in Blackpool," he said. "While it's sad that we need to say goodbye to the existing building, we also have an opportunity to build a sustainable future for a top tourist attraction featuring our world-famous fleet. In the short-term, and plans for regular heritage tours over the summer months will be announced shortly.

"Blackpool is as famous for its historic trams as it is for its tower and the Pleasure Beach, and we are fully committed to preserving the town's rich tramway heritage for future generations to enjoy. Over the next few months, we will work closely with the local authority, other stakeholders and partners on more detailed proposals, and we're looking forward to making further announcements in due course."

Blackpool Transport confirmed that all funds raised by Tramtown, or donations made towards its running, have been held in a separate bank account.

Winter Gardens link with railway past saved

By Hugh Dougherty

SPRINGBURN Winter Gardens, one of the last-surviving links with the locality's railway locomotive building past, has been saved from demolition thanks to a £1.129 million funding boost from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund. The award comes after years of pressure from the Springburn Winter Gardens Trust, railway heritage bodies and MSP Paul Sweeney to have the derelict glass house saved for community use.

The A-listed cast-iron structure, dubbed the biggest glass house in Scotland, was gifted to the local community by Sir John Reid, founder and owner of famous Springburn locomotive builder Neilson Reid Limited, in 1900, but fell into disuse after being storm-damaged in 1983.

The Winter Gardens in its heyday. GLASGOW MITCHELL LIBRARY

Springburn's derelict Winter Gardens has been saved thanks to funding. The ironwork of the building will be fully restored to save it from demolition. HUGH DOUGHERTY

A statue of locomotive builder Sir James Reid stands close to the Winter Gardens building he gifted to the community. HUGH DOUGHERTY

Proposals for demolition in 1988 were ditched, and the structure, built by Temple Ironworks and mirroring contemporary station canopy designs, was left to lie derelict.

The Springburn Winter Gardens Trust announced a plan for complete refurbishment and return to community use, including a space to celebrate the area's railway heritage, in 2020, and the grant now allows work to start on stabilising and conserving the existing structure as the first step on the road to full restoration at a later date.

The trust's Jackie Shearer said: "We really welcome this funding, which is the first step on the road to fully restoring this iconic railway-age heritage building, which is very much in the DNA of our Springburn community.

"The first stage is to allow it to be used as a 'living ruin', allowing community access and event use, before we are able to move to complete renovation. We are hugely encouraged and grateful to all our supporters who have worked so hard to gain this very welcome funding."

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Hawthorn Leslie 0-4-0ST No. 3581 *Marston, Thompson & Evershed No. 3* returned to Foxfield Colliery on April 12. GRAHAM NUTTALL

Foxfield Colliery welcomes the brief return of steam

STEAM made a brief return to Foxfield Colliery on April 12 when a photographic charter featuring Hawthorn Leslie 0-4-0ST works No. 3581 *Marston, Thompson & Evershed No. 3* took steam up the bank for the first time in seven years. The Foxfield Railway has not run public trains along this section from Dilhorne Park since 2019, with the need to prioritise services on the main running line following the Covid-19 pandemic, along with repairs to the track also being required.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* magazine issue 342, a £250,000 appeal has been launched to halt the decay currently affecting many of the buildings which is preventing the colliery site from being opened to the public and transform it into a new visitor destination.

In 1967, the heritage railway established itself there before moving to its current base in Caverswall Road in 1982. Director Dave Scragg said there is a strong ambition to see the railway return to the place its journey started in time for its 60th anniversary next year, but that doing so would rely on the appeal target being met. To donate, visit www.foxfieldrailway.co.uk/foxfield-colliery-appeal

Island's Ivatt 2MT is set up for second season of gala touring

ISLE of Wight Steam Railway locomotives would appear to be in high demand – as Ivatt 2MT No. 41313 is gearing up for a second year of gala touring!

The Crewe-built 2-6-2T, which entered service in 1952, made five visits to other heritage lines in 2025, appearing at the Bluebell Railway's branch line weekend and Swanage Railway steam gala last March, followed by a trip to the Spa Valley Railway for its Cuckoo Line gala in June, which preceded a visit to the Mid-Norfolk Railway's own steam gala a few weeks later. In September, the wandering Ivatt made its final outing of the year at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway's autumn steam gala.

With IOW-based 'Terrier' W8 *Freshwater* having already crossed the Solent this year for the Bluebell Railway's spring gala (as reported in issue 344), No. 41313 is gearing up for a second tour of mainland England, with the first confirmed destination being the Mid-Hants Railway for the October 2-4 autumn steam gala. The event will reunite two locally-based locomotives, with resident classmate No. 41312 having also been based at Faversham shed between 1952, when it was outshopped from Crewe works, until 1959.

No. 41313 moved to the same depot in June 1955, having previously been based at Exmouth Junction and Three Bridges. Both locomotives were redeployed together to Ashford on April 14, 1959, Barnstaple Junction the following February, and finally Brighton on April 1, 1963, before being separated.

Isle of Wight-based 2MT No. 41313 will star at the Mid-Hants Railway's autumn steam gala alongside its immediate numerical predecessor. Both locomotives were based locally at Faversham between 1955 and 1959. OWEN HAYWARD

No. 41312's boiler certificate is due to expire this coming winter, after which it will join the queue to await an overhaul.

The gala will therefore present the opportunity to see these two numerically successive classmates running together for the first time in preservation.

It is understood that at least one other railway was negotiating the hire of No. 41313 while it is off-island, but nothing had been confirmed as this issue went to press.

Hunslet secures long-term future at Welsh colliery line

By Owen Hayward

THE Blaenavon Heritage Railway has purchased Hunslet 0-6-0ST No. 1873 *Jessie* from its previous owner, safeguarding the locomotive's future on the heritage line at the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

No. 1873 of 1937 was ordered by the Guest, Keen Iron & Steel Company for its East Moors Steelworks in Cardiff. The second to be constructed of the 16-strong 48150 class, a special order designed specifically for the iron and steel industries, it became the steelworks' No.18 and was put straight to work hauling ladle wagons of molten slag to the foreshore, ready for discharge into the sea.

This particular job was known to the 5000-strong workforce as 'the Jessie,' and much like the predecessor engine it replaced, this led to the locomotive gaining what was initially an unofficial name.

Jessie was the last steam locomotive working for EMS before it was withdrawn in 1965, after which it 14 years as a playground feature in the nearby Splott Park in Cardiff. Following the city council deciding to offer it for sale, former EMR apprentice and employee Mike Pearce bought *Jessie* in 1979.

Following a thorough restoration which lasted more than two decades, it returned to steam at the Llangollen Railway in 2003 in a modified form, with a side-tank arrangement in order to portray the character of Thomas the Tank Engine.

It served this purpose for 15 years before returning to its original configuration in 2019, after which it moved to Blaenavon.

It has been based on the line – which once served the Big Pit iron and coal mines – ever since. With such strong local connections and interest, the locomotive has proven popular with volunteers and visitors alike, so when Mike announced last year that he wished to sell *Jessie* and offered it to the BHR, the railway launched a fundraising appeal to help purchase it, as reported in issue 337. Thanks to donations raised by both the public and railway members, including one generous benefactor, the BHR was able to acquire the engine, and it was formally handed over in April.

***Jessie* in action at the Blaenavon Heritage Railway on May 9.** LAURA STANDERWICK

On May 24/25, *Jessie* ran as part of the railway's Port to Pit coal train weekend, at which newly-overhauled Barclay 0-6-0ST No. 2074 (NCB No. 1) *Llantarnam Abbey* made its debut following overhaul at Williton by West Somerset Restoration and its original livery restored by Blaenavon volunteers working flat out to have it ready in time.

The event saw both passenger and freight trains in operation, including the rake of mineral and hopper wagons which formed the backbone of such traffic in the region.

Steamship *Waverley* celebrates 80th sailing season

PS *WAVERLEY*, the world's last seagoing paddle steamer, which was built for the LNER in 1946, started the 2026 sailing season by departing Glasgow to mark 80 years since its launch on the Clyde.

Crowds gathered on the quayside on May 8 as *Waverley* returned to service for a nationwide programme of cruises which will see it visit destinations around the UK coast, carrying thousands of passengers aboard the much-loved vessel.

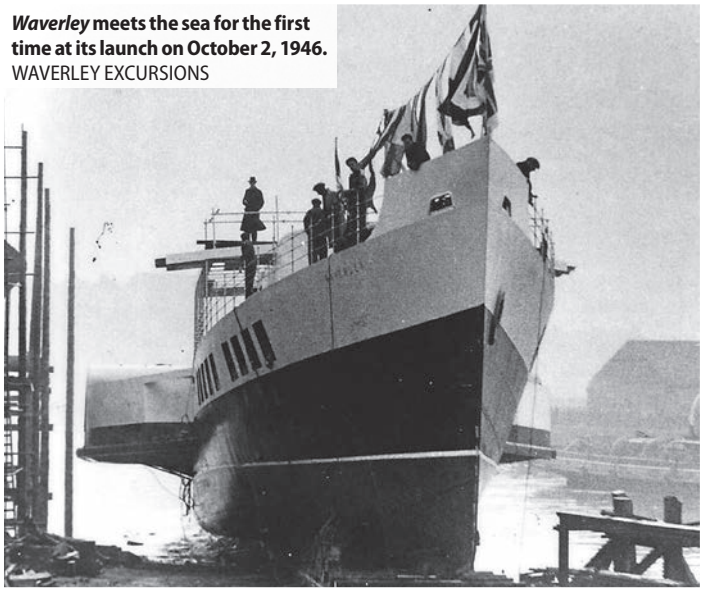
Waverley Excursions general manager Paul Semple said: "Eight decades on, passengers can still experience the unique sights, sounds and atmosphere of travelling aboard a real steamship, and we are delighted to see *Waverley* back sailing after a winter refit which saw a £1.5 million investment in the ship."

Following sailings around the Clyde, to Oban and the Inner Hebrides, and to the south of Devon and Cornwall, *Waverley* was scheduled to visit the Bristol Channel and south-west Wales from May 26 until June 17, North Wales and the Mersey on June 19-22 and Northern Ireland on June 23/24, before spending a summer on the Clyde from June 26 until August 30. The vessel will then spend September 3-22 visiting the south coast and Isle of Wight, London, and the Thames Estuary from September 24 to October 11 and the Clyde on October 17/18.

On June 16, 2027, the 80th anniversary of *Waverley*'s maiden voyage will be celebrated.

Tickets are available online now from waverleyexcursions.co.uk or by calling 0141 243 2224.

***Waverley* meets the sea for the first time at its launch on October 2, 1946.** WAVERLEY EXCURSIONS



The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway's Pullman camping coaches, *Elmire* and *Maid of Kent* at Ravenglass station, have achieved national recognition at the inaugural Travelchapter Showcase Awards 2026, coming second in the Extraordinary Stays category and third in the Experience Collection. For details, visit ravenglass-railway.co.uk/accommodation/ RER

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Fond farewell to pioneering new-build *Hengist* engineering director Geoff Turner

By Robin Jones

THE Standard Steam Locomotive Company, builder of new-build Clan Pacific No. 72010 *Hengist*, is in mourning after engineering director Geoff Turner died on March 28.

Geoff, 70, was a key member of the team that reorganised the company in 2011 and created the foundations for the organisation. He was instrumental in forming the successful relationship between the company and CTL Seal/Diamond Group, where the project is based.

A SSLC statement said that Geoff's lifelong passion for the BR Standards began during his teenage years as a keen railway modeller. He admired not only the aesthetic style of the locomotives, but also the strong family resemblance that linked the various classes together, with each locomotive designed for a specific purpose and duty.

One of Geoff's few regrets was that he never saw any of the famous Clan Pacifics in operation. He was only 12 years old when steam ended on BR and would often jokingly remark that he envied friends who had seen locomotives such as Nos. 72007, 72008 and 72009 being serviced at Millhouses Shed, not far from where he lived in Sheffield during the early 1960s.

Geoff's involvement in the heritage sector began in the 1980s with Peak Rail at Matlock and Buxton,

Geoff Turner with new-build Clan Pacific No. 72010 *Hengist*. SSLC

where he worked on tracklaying, building projects, and served on several committees. He joined the team rescuing Standard 4MT 2-6-4T No. 80080 from Barry scrapyard and later assisted Phil Brown in the rescue of 9F 2-10-0 No. 92214 – projects that reflected Geoff's practical engineering skills, commitment and dedication to preserving Britain's railway heritage.

In 2002, Geoff became involved with the SSLC after attending a gala event at Barrow Hill Roundhouse, where he saw the cab and front-end display for the future No. 72010 *Hengist*, including the front platform plates, cover plates, buffer beam with oval buffers and smokebox door. Captivated immediately, he struck up a conversation with the team on the sales stand and was quickly drawn into the project, first meeting Mike Sedgley, who remains closely involved with the project to this day.

Over the following years, Geoff contributed whenever possible, including helping at Herston Works in Swanage by setting up supports for the frame extensions during public displays and assisting with drilling the cabside plates. He also became a founder member of the project to build Standard 3MT 2-6-2T No. 82045 at Bridgnorth on the Severn Valley Railway. In May 2011, alongside Mike Sedgley, he helped organise an extraordinary general meeting to reform and revive the struggling 72010 Hengist project, after which he was appointed engineering director.

The SSLC statement said: "Away from engineering and railways, Geoff enjoyed walking through the hills and valleys of Derbyshire with his wife and daughter. Geoff was also a proud grandfather to his two wonderful grandchildren, who brought him immense joy and happiness.

"Among Geoff's many achievements, his greatest legacy to the heritage railway movement will undoubtedly be his contribution towards the completion and future steaming of both Nos. 72010 *Hengist* and 82045 – locomotives that future generations will admire and enjoy because of his dedication, expertise and passion. Geoff will be sorely missed."

London Transport Museum plans events to celebrate 120 years of the Piccadilly line

LONDON Transport Museum in Covent Garden is to celebrate 120 years of the Piccadilly line with a season of public events.

Visitors are invited to take part in a creative workshop on Saturday, June 13, where ticketholders can take inspiration from the line to create a unique textile artwork. On August 22, railway historian Tim Dunn will give a talk on the history of the line, while a series of behind-the-scenes visits during the open days on September 25-27 at London Transport Museum Depot in Acton will focus on stations on the line designed by architect Charles Holden.

Visitors can also explore secret parts of the line – including a disused station, closed platforms and time-capsule corridors – on the museum's exclusive Hidden London guided tours.

October half-term family activities in the museum's galleries at Covent Garden will celebrate the line toom

Left: Barons Court station in May 1962 with a Piccadilly line train to Uxbridge comprising 1959 stock. BEN BROOKSBANK/CREATIVE COMMONS

and plans were underway for another heritage train journey, the details of which were still to be announced.

The Piccadilly line opened in December 1906 as the Great Northern, Piccadilly and Brompton Railway. Running between Finsbury Park and Hammersmith, at nine miles it was the longest deep-level tube railway in the world at the time. It was built using an engineering device called the Greathead Shield and cast-iron tunnel linings, an engineering breakthrough allowing railways to be constructed deep beneath the capital's built-up city streets from 1890 onwards. In 1911, it became the first London Underground line to introduce an electric escalator at Earl's Court.

To book tickets, visit www.ltmuseum.co.uk

Part of the Intercity 125 HST set hit by the overnight vandal attack. ELR

HST set at East Lancashire targeted by vandals

THE East Lancashire Railway was targeted by overnight vandals during the early May bank holiday.

A locomotive and several coaches from the InterCity 125 heritage set were damaged, with extensive graffiti sprayed across the rolling stock. One coach had been repainted only in February.

Once discovered, volunteers worked tirelessly for several hours using specialist cleaning materials to remove the graffiti before it could permanently set. Their swift action prevented what could have been significant and lasting damage, although further polishing and restoration work is still required.

Greater Manchester Police attended the scene, gathered evidence, and stepped up patrols.

A spokesman for vehicles' owner, the 125 Group, said: "As a charity which relies on people's generosity and spare time to do what we do, we are very grateful to the East Lancashire Railway volunteers for their speedy response to clear up this act of violence".

'Frustrating'

ELR chairman Mike Kelly said: "This is a disgraceful and deeply frustrating attack on a railway run largely by volunteers. It is nothing short of a kick in the teeth for those who work so hard to maintain and preserve historic traction and rolling stock.

"What makes this even more infuriating is that this follows a similar incident less than 12 months ago, when nearly 30 glass panes in two coaches were smashed, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. We are working closely with the police and are determined to see those responsible identified and held accountable."

Happy 75th to the line that started it all

In 1951, a narrow gauge railway in mid-Wales became the first to be entirely run by volunteers, and it is still going strong 75 years later. **Owen Hayward** attended the Talyllyn Railway's celebrations of its own success – and all that followed it.

"Sometimes, it takes only a small stone falling to start an avalanche. If this seems a large claim to make, founded on nothing more than a mildly ridiculous, no-longer-needed, long-funnelled, old Welsh narrow-gauge railway, and some absurd nutters who would not let it die, just stop for a minute and look around you."

Those were the words of J B Snell in his 1992 foreword to the republished edition of Railway Adventure, Tom Rolt's memoirs of the early days of the Talyllyn Railway. Snell was also present at the birth of the heritage railway movement, serving as a fireman in the line's first season of operation. In that very same foreword, he writes: "I do not think any of us quite realised what we were starting. I, certainly, had a typical teenager's cause myself: if we could hold the fort at such a threatened outpost as the Talyllyn Railway, surely nobody would have the arrogance to dream of closing such useful branches to those places like Tenterden or Bellingham (North Tyne), let alone important main lines like the Somerset & Dorset."

Sadly, those very lines did close, but parts of some have also reopened as their own heritage ventures.

"Tom's cause was, as it turned out, more realistic and achievable: to reverse the fashion to centralise and nationalise; to restore the tradition of self-supporting local concerns in which people could take a legitimate pride in their achievement," Snell went on to say – and how lucky we are today for Rolt's vision, for it has birthed a myriad of heritage railways large and small, not just at home in the UK, but also round the entire globe.

There is no doubt that while the movement may well have started up without the likes of Rolt and his supporters, who followed their vision to preserve this particular line in the remote Welsh countryside, the TR's success lay the foundations for those that followed. It gave preservationists a bona fide example that a society could take over and run steam trains and do it well. Without them, heritage railways today may have looked much different – or even been substantially fewer in number.

Seventy-five years on

The TR has run its annual celebration of that first train for a good many years, always on May 14. How fortunate it was that this year the date fell on a Thursday – perfectly placing the occasion to start off a four-day event.

Writing of his trepidation about opening day, Rolt said in his book: "It would have been too bad if such careful preparation had been greeted by a day of rain, but fortunately for once, the Welsh weather was kind… and all that Monday the sun shone down from a sky of cloudless blue."

It was almost as if Mother Nature was throwing her support behind the anniversary too, as it was very much the same in 2026. In addition to the TR's Heart of Gold supporters – formed of members who make regular monthly donations to the TRPS – guests were invited from throughout the sector, including Vintage Trains' own Michael Whitehouse, whose father Pat was one of the society's founder members, and delegates from a number of other railways.

While some invited dignitaries were unable to attend owing to the State Opening

Just some of those responsible for keeping the Talyllyn Railway going who gathered at Tywyn Wharf on May 15 prior to the first train of the gala.

Not only was the TR a pioneer in volunteer operation, but also in new-build traction. The frames of the original No. 5 (right), which was built in 1952, have returned to the railway as its reconstruction advances. To the left is *Toby*, a motor trolley built in 1955, and the pair are seen here on display at Tywyn Wharf throughout the gala.

For the first time in 11 years, steam trains ran through the Fathew Valley all night long on Saturday into Sunday, with all very well-supported. No. 4 *Edward Thomas* prepares to depart from Tywyn Wharf with the marginally late 1.35am to Nant Gwernol. KENNY FELSTEAD

of Parliament commencing the day before, Dwyfor Meirionydd MP Liz Saville Roberts attended, having left London at 5.30am that morning. Liz's constituency contains no less than 10 railways of various sizes – the most of any constituency in the British Isles.

"It was pressed upon me very early on, when I became a MP 11 years ago, how important the heritage railway lines are to this constituency, to Wales and beyond," she said. "This is the first one; *the* heritage railway that started all the tradition for this area of Gwynedd, this area of Wales, and indeed the world.

"It is an extraordinary thing, and we are celebrating 75 years of that achievement, of those working on this line who keep that going."

Another guest was Steve Oates, chief executive officer of the Heritage Railway Association, who talked about the impact the TR has had on the global movement.

"For as long as I can remember, railway anniversaries have been about major milestones from deep railway history," he said. "Just last year, the world focused on the 200th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, but in no less a fashion than how *Locomotion No. 1* created something new and lasting, so too did *Dolgoch* when it was flagged away for the very first time into the foothills of Snowdonia and the history books.

"It is quite rare that we talk about our own history – the heritage of heritage railways. It was only 126 years after the S&DR established the beginnings of the world's first passenger railway that the Talyllyn established the beginnings of the world's heritage railways.

"I suspect the people who witnessed the event that day never envisaged that this wasn't just the start of a new era for this railway – it was the start of a worldwide movement.

"No one is quite sure of the total, but in some form or other, more than 1000 heritage railways operate in more than 70 countries round the globe. There are more than 350 in Europe, 97 in Australia, three in Japan, 10 in Brazil, one each in Taiwan and Tunisia, 38 in Canada – and so it goes on. Here in the UK are some 200 heritage and tourist railways, and 64 years ago, the TR was even a founding member of what is now the HRA.

"Heritage rail is a part of the UK's priceless cultural heritage. Between us, we preserve

THEN AND NOW

Inset: Initially, trains only ran as far as Rhydyronen while the track was still being sorted the rest of the way to Abergynolwyn. To run *Dolgoch* round its stock on the opening day of May 14, 1951, it had to be detached and shunt into a siding, necessitating the carriages being hand-shunted into the platform before it could couple to the rear. NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY MUSEUM

Above: Fast-forward to May 15, 2026, and while the siding has long since been removed, the station is otherwise very much the same, save for the platform being extended to accommodate the longer trains that now operate.

Left: The railway has been an inspiration for not just film, but literature too. In 1982, *Sir Haydn* first portrayed the character of Sir Handel from the Reverend Wilbert Awdry's Thomas stories, and so this was repeated on May 16, with No. 3 carrying the original face, seen during a water stop at Dolgoch. PAUL LAWRENCE

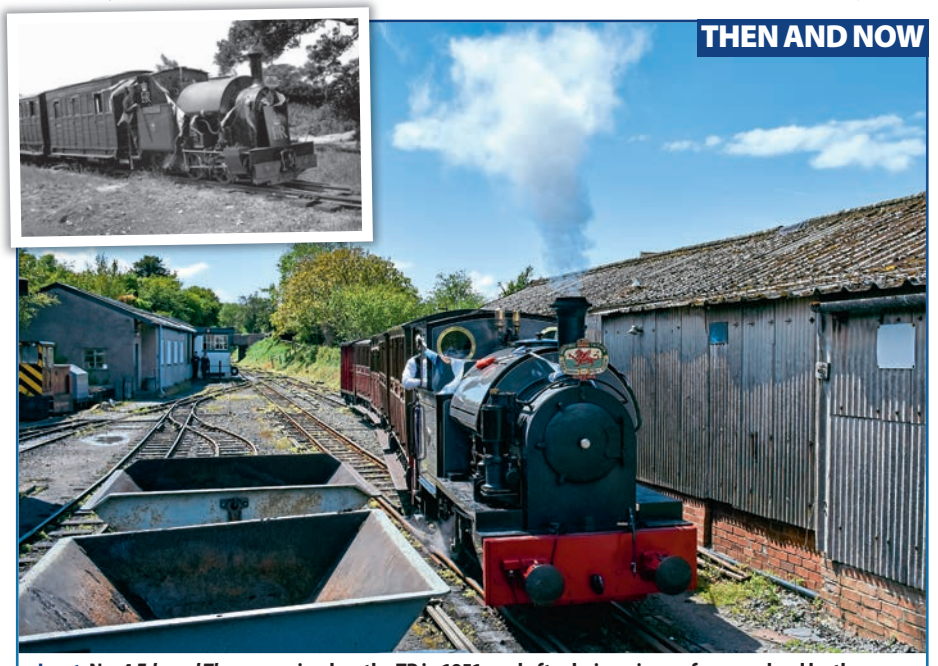
much of the very fabric of the UK's heritage, including the buildings and the infrastructure, most dating back to Victorian era. We are working heritage, preserving historic rolling stock ranging from Victorian wooden-bodied carriages to majestic, centuries-old steam locomotives.

"We are operational and tangible heritage, preserving the memories, stories, traditions, operational practices and the skills from more than 200 years of railways, and our heritage sells.

"By bringing to life part of the nation's cultural heritage, we enrich visitor experiences. We bring enjoyment and learning to some 13 million visitors every year, let alone the hundreds of thousands who enjoy heritage steam and diesel on the main line. Many railways are the anchor attractions in national parks, coastal towns and regional towns around the UK, generating huge economic impart on their localalities.

"Heritage railways are about people. Hand in hand with preservation, so also began a new social and lifestyle phenomenon – railway volunteering. For decades, generations of heritage railway people have voluntarily given their energy and enthusiasm to make the dreams of saving lines, locomotives, stations and rolling stock a reality.

"As May 14 marked the Talyllyn's 75th anniversary, so to must it mark heritage rail's 75th birthday. Think about it: people, skills, jobs, opportunities, culture, transport, heritage and tourism – heritage railways do it all, and it all began here 75 years ago."



Inset: **No. 4 *Edward Thomas* arrived on the TR in 1951, and after being given a free overhaul by the Hunslet Engine Co, facilitated by company chairman John Alcock, who was also a member of the preservation society, it entered service in 1952. On June 6, 1953, it pulled the 'Coronation Special' to celebrate the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II.** TALYLLYN COLLECTION
Above: **On May 15, 2026, the train was recreated, complete with the original headboard. Though taken from as close to the original spot as possible, Pendre has changed extensively over the last 75 years and still retains its charm. As extensively reported, a redevelopment project will soon see the site transforming further to ensure the TR is on sound footing to see it through the next 75 years.**

Inset: **The winding house on the incline that served Abergynolwyn village remained in place until the late 1960s, after which its deteriorating condition, combined with the need to realign the track for passenger services, saw it demolished – something that has been heavily lamented, despite the justification.** DAVID MITCHELL/TALYLLYN COLLECTION
Above: **While the building is no more, the winding drum was abandoned at the site. A full reconstruction is unlikely, but the TR's heritage group is progressing with restoring the iron drum, to be mounted on a pair of slate pillars. No. 5 *Midlander* passes by on May 16 with a recreation of a tipper train that ran to Nant Gwernol as the line was prepared for opening to passengers.**

Community spirit

Echoing Steve's comments, TRPS president Chris Price said: "We gathered not simply to celebrate a railway, but to celebrate an idea – one that has transformed railways into living history and communities of enthusiasts into custodians of national heritage. The spark lit here in Tywyn travelled far further than the rails to Nant Gwernol.

"Anniversaries are not just about looking backwards; they are also moments to reflect on what truly matters today. The Talyllyn remains, above all else, a community – one of volunteers and staff who give their time, energy and skill with extraordinary generosity, a collective which has sustained and developed the railway with professionalism and dedication, a community of members and supporters whose loyalty spans generations, and a community which tries and recognises that its history is deeply rooted in the people, language and culture of Wales.

"What makes the Talyllyn especially important in the modern world is that it has always been a place where people can belong. Our railway welcomes people of all backgrounds, ages, abilities and experiences.

"Whether someone arrives as a lifelong enthusiast, a curious visitor, a young volunteer discovering the joys of engine cleaning for the first time, or simply seeking friendship and purpose, there is a place for them here at the Talyllyn Railway. That inclusive spirit is one of our greatest strengths.

"Heritage railways are sometimes described as preserving the past, but at the TR, we have always done something more than that. We do preserve locomotives, buildings and traditions, but we also create opportunities for learning, confidence, companionship and shared endeavour.

"Many people have found lifelong friendships and even life partners on this railway, some have discovered careers, some have discovered confidence they never knew they possessed, and many have discovered the simple but profound satisfaction of working together to achieve something worthwhile.

"That spirit of inclusion and shared ownership is as important now as it was in 1951. As we celebrate this 75th anniversary, we should remember with gratitude the pioneers who made all that possible, the volunteers who worked through impossible odds in the early years, and the generations who built locomotives, staffed stations, sold tickets, cleaned it all and kept the railway alive through difficult times. We stand on the

New, as well as old: Baguley Drewry Nos. 12 *St Cadfan* and 11 *Trecwn* pass Brynglas blockpost on the Sunday morning with a train made up of the railway's newest carriages. KENNY FELSTEAD

Above: *Dolgoch* climbs Brynglas Bank with the recreation of the slate train run in July 2021 to celebrate the North West Wales slate landscape being given UNESCO World Heritage status. PAUL LAWRENCE

Left: No. 7 *Tom Rolt*, the railway's youngest steam locomotive, built at Pendre in 1991, and Baguley Drewry No. 11 *Trecwn*, built in 1998, pass through Dolgoch Top Woods on the approach to Quarry Siding.

shoulders of these giants, and we look forward with confidence. The future of the TR depends on continuing to welcome new generations into our movement – young people, families, local communities and visitors from round the world. It depends on remaining relevant, accessible, and open to all.

"If the past 75 years have taught us anything, it's that preservation succeeds when it's powered not only by nostalgia, but also by people. Let us not only celebrate locomotives and infrastructure, but friendships; not only heritage, but opportunity; not only history, but also hope for the future of this railway. To everyone who has contributed to the TRPS over the last 75 years, thank you. And to anyone who will carry this remarkable railway into the next 75 years, we proudly place it in your hands."

Next generation

It is typical of the TR that just as its locomotives and stock have lasted these past 75 years, so too has the ribbon from 1951, which is stitched back together for each Founders' Day, ready to be cut once more. Aptly, in celebration of its strong youth volunteer count, Young Members' Group chairman Alex Hando and secretary Isobel Coulls were invited to cut the ceremonial tape just as society chairman Bill Trinder did all those years beforehand.

"It's absolutely surreal to think not only what we're doing and why we're here, but also the consequences and relevance that all this has," said Alex. "The founders of the TR had a real vision of what they wanted to see, but if they were here today, I think they couldn't have even imagined how different it would be, but how it is also the same. The railway has a real essence; it's something that cannot really be described, but it has a spirit which is incredibly powerful and keeps people coming back."

Isobel, who is one of the daughters of TR driver and current National Railway Museum senior curator Anthony Coulls, said: "I've been coming here since before I could talk, but I was never forced into volunteering – it was always something about that the passion the volunteers had, it was infectious. When I was finally at the age where I could volunteer myself, I had to take that opportunity.

HERITAGE RAIL 75: STRETCHING BEYOND THE TALYLLYN

AS HAS rightfully been said many times over, this year is about more than just the Talyllyn Railway's own anniversary – it is about the entire heritage railway movement, and the Heritage Railway Association is eager to see that aspect celebrated by railways and museums throughout the rest of the year.

Mads Kaiser, a TR volunteer from Denmark who designed the TR's 75th anniversary artwork, has created a logo for use by all heritage railways, available via the HRA, whether a member of that organisation or not.

It is hoped that these lines will jump on board with another year of national railway-related celebration and share stories from their own histories, but also talk about the people who have made it all happen. With railways and museums boasting workforces that contain volunteers whose day jobs can range from executives at top-brand car firms to street sweepers, and from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, these are the people who keep our heritage going – and who deserve to be celebrated. Some have started at the bottom and worked their way up to managerial positions, others have taken the skills they have learnt and used them to help grow careers, and some have come in to transform and improve railways.

Perhaps you know someone you feel should be recognised, who has gone above and beyond, or perhaps they're a modest shopworker whose smile proves infectious and leaves visitors with a positive experience. Maybe there is someone among your ranks who has come in and improved administration, safety, or the overall way things operate? Share their stories and impact and join in with this celebration using the hashtag #OurRailwayAdventure on social media.

"It's so lovely to see what a diverse array of volunteers we have. It's great to be a part of welcoming and inspiring others to join, and to preserve heritage. Let's continue it, and look to the future."

With the ribbon cut and passengers aboard the carriages that have continuously served the railway for more than 160 years, Fletcher Jennings 0-4-0WT No. 2 *Dolgoch* departed Tywyn Wharf at 10.20am for Abergynolwyn, just as it did in 1951, when it only ran as far as Rhydyronen, the line beyond still being under an engineering possession at the time. With this, thus started the long weekend of celebration.

From Friday through to Sunday, the TR recreated what it described as some of its greatest hits from the past 75 years, incorporating all of its available locomotives and a fair amount of rolling stock.

Friday, May 15 focused on the first two decades of operations, with four steam locomotives and one diesel in use. Although the TR only ever had two locomotives prior to preservation, No. 1 *Talyllyn* was in a dire condition, with No. 2 serviceable but not in the greatest of health either. By sheer coincidence, the nearby Corris Railway, which had closed in 1948, was built to the same unusual gauge of 2ft 3in. The track was lifted, and much was salvaged by the TR for relaying its own crumbling infrastructure, and the two Corris locomotives, which had been stored at Machynlleth, were bought at a knock-down price, arriving in March 1951. Both needed some work before they could run regularly. The Hughes Falcon (No. 3) gained a reputation for derailing itself – the result of the TR's track actually being 13mm wider than the official gauge – while the Kerr Stuart Tattoo (No. 4) was briefly stored until being given an overhaul at the Hunslet Engine Company free of charge thanks to its chairman, John Alcock, being a member of the TRPS.

Inset: **The demolition of the winding house did not see its material wasted. Its slate was incorporated into the expansion of Abergynolwyn's station building, alongside which No. 3 *Sir Haydn* is seen in 1969.** JOHN ADAMS/TALYLLYN COLLECTION

Above: **On May 17, No. 3 is seen in almost the exact same spot as it arrives double-heading 'The Quarryman' with No. 4 *Edward Thomas*. Some will also know this station as the setting for one of the Reverend Wilbert Awdry's tales, in which No. 4's fictional counterpart leaves the refreshment lady behind – a story inspired by a real-life event that happened here in 1952!**

Inset: **On May 22, 1976, the extension to Nant Gwernol finally opened to passengers. Pre-preservation, only slate trains, along with the odd quarry workers' and owner's services, had used this section. No. 2 *Dolgoch* is seen arriving at Abergynolwyn on its way to the line's new terminus, and while plenty of photos exist of the train here, there is surprisingly little coverage of it actually at Nant Gwernol on this special day.** TALYLLYN COLLECTION

Above: **No. 2 at Nant Gwernol on May 16, 2026, during a recreation of the special train. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the extension's opening, the original headboard was allowed out of the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum and posed at Wharf. Its fragile condition might mean this is the last time it will ever do so, although suggestions of making a replica have been mooted.**

Recreations galore

No. 4 went on to enter service in 1952, with test runs seeing it paired up with No. 2 on at least two occasions – once leading the train, the second with *Dolgoch* in front. Rather coincidentally, when it returned from overhaul, No. 4's saddle tank was painted grey, similar to the Kerr Stuart works grey livery it currently carries, while No. 2 wore a green livery not too dissimilar to how it also now appears. In 1953, No. 4 worked a special train to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, making the Talyllyn the only heritage railway to be operating at the crowning of two monarchs.

Elsewhere, Ruston & Hornsby 4WDM No. 5 *Midlander* shuttled between Tywyn Wharf and Brynglas, reviving the sight of trains that once ran to ferry those living along the line to markets during the 1960s.

The early efforts of the TR's pioneering volunteers inspired T B Clarke to pen a film script, The Titfield Thunderbolt, following discussions with Tom Rolt, the driving force of the preservationists. To celebrate that link, 'The Spirit(s) of Titfield' ran three times that day, with accessible saloon No. 7 sandwiched between two of the new 'Ffesdale' bogie saloons, with opening end windows in each allowing a bar to be set up in the centre carriage and pints served to passengers in those seated either side. Among those serving customers was railway historian and TV presenter Tim Dunn, who dressed up as the character of Mr Valentine from the Ealing comedy, aided by YouTuber and fellow TR livestream presenter Max Davies.

That evening saw Tim host a Titfield-themed quiz in the Kings Café at Tywyn Wharf, with a plethora of railway-related film prizes donated by StudioCanal, the rights-holder for The Titfield Thunderbolt, including two copies of the new 4K remaster of the film, which contains bonus features such as a new mini-documentary detailing the connection between railway and motion picture.

Saturday brought with it further recreations, and the celebration of a second notable anniversary: 50 years since the extension to Nant Gwernol was opened. Pre-preservation, the line beyond Abergynolwyn was used only by trains serving the inclines. In the 1960s

RAILWAY HISTORY REVIVED…AND YOUR CHANCE TO WIN!

WITH this year's celebrations of the Talyllyn Railway well underway, another piece of railway revival nostalgia is helping keep the subject front and centre.

This month, StudioCanal is releasing a brilliant two-disc collector's edition blu-ray version ofclassic Ealing comedy The Titfield Thunderbolt, meticulously restored in 4K, and we have half a dozen copies of this set to be won by readers.

The 1953 movie was in part inspired by the efforts of the Talyllyn volunteers just a couple of years earlier, as reported, and tells the story of a group of villagers trying to keep their branch line operating after British Railways moved to close it.

The cast of characters, played by stars including Stanley Holloway, George Relph and Sid James, must overcome many trials and tribulations, including devious bus operators and a derailed loco.

Filmed near Bath, and with Liverpool and Manchester Railway loco *Lion* starring as the *Thunderbolt*, it has come to be seen as a classic British comedy, and the production was covered at the time by our sister publication, *The Railway Magazine* in its March 1953 issue. Extras on the new collector's edition include a segment on the railway that sparked The Titfield Thunderbolt with Tim Dunn, The Titfield Thunderbolt Pathé short, the Making Of, Douglas Slocombe on Charles Crichton interviewed by Matthew Sweet, a 64-page booklet, and a poster of the original artwork.

You can order a copy at www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0GT9S8GY2, or why not try and win? Each is worth £34.99, and we have half a dozen copies that must be won. They go on general sale on June 15.

To be a part of our prize draw, simply visit **www.therailwayhub.co.uk/73029/titfield-competition/** or scan the QR code and follow the instructions.

Entries must be with us by July 9. Good luck!

and early 1970s, *Midlander* could be found trundling back and forth along this stretch with engineering trains, and work took place to prepare it for regular passenger workings for the first time in the line's history. No. 5 repeated this for the gala prior to *Dolgoch* hauling the first train of the day to Nant Gwernol, just as it had five decades previously.

Rather appropriately, the driver of No. 2 on this occasion was Tom Curtis, a member of the Jones family, which has been involved with the TR since long before the preservation days. The test train along the extension was driven by his father, while the official opening train, which ran on May 22, 1976, was driven by his grandfather, making this occasion particularly special for him as he followed in his family's footsteps.

As well as inspiring Titfield, the TR also drew support from author the Reverend Wilbert Awdry, who used the railway and its stock as the basis of the Skarloey Railway in his Thomas the Tank Engine stories. Characters from the TR's fictional counterpart have made regular appearances in Wales over the years and to celebrate that literary link, No. 3 was dressed up to portray *Sir Handel,* just as it did for the first time in 1982, complete with the original face.

Team spirit

For the first time in 11 years, the railway scheduled all-night steam, which ran through from Saturday evening into the early hours of Sunday morning. This was the only time throughout the whole weekend where issues arose; during its first outing in the afternoon of May 16, No. 7 *Tom Rolt's* injectors failed, meaning that it was unavailable to work its booked night turns. Volunteers swiftly leapt into action to prepare *Talyllyn* to step in at short notice, but not before the service was considerably delayed.

The TR volunteer spirit was clearly on show – while a night crew at Pendre worked tirelessly throughout to repair No. 7, others stepped up to man blockposts along the line to enable the late-running trains to pass in different loops than scheduled. A further crew prepared No. 3 *Sir Haydn* in a bid to get services back on time, meaning a 40-minute layover for servicing was no longer needed, and trains were back on time for the 3.35am departure from Tywyn Wharf.

With everything running right time once more, Sunday got underway without any hitches and saw the revival of 'The Quarryman' – a staple service of the 1990s with a mix of carriages new and old to introduce the railway to new visitors – and 'Cadi's Train,' utilising stock used for filming the S4C children's programme Dreigiau Cadi (Cadi's Dragons), which has been filming on the railway since 2023; the crew had even been on-site in the days immediately before Founders' Day, shooting for the show's fourth series.

One final recreation was No. 2 with a rake of heritage wagons, which was run on July 28, 2021, when the slate landscape of Wales was officially given UNESCO world heritage status.

Hundreds of volunteers young and old kept the railway running, contributing thousands of man hours during the gala itself and the surrounding days. Although the figures were still being tallied as this issue went to press, general manager (commercial) Lorraine Simkiss said that forecast figures had been well and truly exceeded.

As the railway starts on its journey into the next 75 years, what comes next? The Pendre redevelopment plans are advancing rapidly in the background, with contracts currently out to tender.

These have been adapted slightly, with one proposal for a new shed to be built on an old orchard site dropped due to emergency egress restrictions.

To counter this, the purchase of a plot of land at Ty Mawr which will provide space for much-needed additional carriage storage space, is under negotiation,

Work on the new volunteer accommodation at Trefri, the house of Edward Thomas, the last general of the line pre-preservation, is also due to commence this summer. The building is set to offer accessible rooms for those travelling to volunteer at the railway, while it will also receive an extension for office and meeting room space.

A new battery electric locomotive is also due to arrive imminently from Alan Keef's workshops, which will provide a locomotive for use on light duties around the railway while meeting the railway's ambitions to reduce its environmental impact.

One thing that is clear: the future is bright for the Talyllyn Railway – and if that is anything to go by, for heritage railways in general too. HR

'WINES AND SPIRITS FIRST!'

The railway celebrated its connection to the Ealing Comedy The Titfield Thunderbolt, which was inspired by the railway's pioneering years, on May 15. Driver James Foster (left) got into character as the Reverend Weech, and historian Tim Dunn (centre) adopted the guise of Mr Valentine. While on the move, drinks were served by Tim and fellow livestream presenter Max Davies (right) from van No. 7 – which once served as the railway's mobile refreshment stall.

Order up! Tim Dunn serves a drink from the mobile bar aboard van No. 7.

HERITAGE RAILWAY
THE COMPLETE PRESERVATION NEWS MAGAZINE

On Monday, May 18, A2 Pacific No. 60532 *Blue Peter* was rostered to work Jeremy Hosking's private 'Chairman's Train' from Crewe to Carlisle, the set having first set out from Euston hauled by an electric locomotive at 5.33am. The A2 and its rake of blood and custard-liveried carriages are seen at Sheriff Brow Viaduct on the Settle-Carlisle line. DAVID COLLIER

Into Shakespeare country with Saphos Trains

SAPHOS Trains will run to Stratford-Upon-Avon on Wednesday, July 8, expected to be behind West Country light Pacific No. 34046 *Braunton*.

Starting from Barrow-in-Furness behind a heritage diesel, the tour will pick up additional passengers at Dalton, Ulverston, Grange-over-Sands, Arnside and Carnforth before heading south for more passengers at Lancaster, Preston, Wigan North Western, and Warrington Bank Quay.

Continuing on the West Coast Main Line, there will be a pause at Crewe for a change of locomotive, which will see diesel swap for steam.

From there, the journey south will pass through Stafford and then onto the Chase Line via Walsall to Birmingham.

Passing through Birmingham New Street and on to Tyseley, the train will take the North Warwickshire Line via Henley-in-Arden to Stratford, where customers will have three hours to explore William Shakespeare's home town 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 saphostrains.com

Take the 'White Rose to York and Scarborough'

VINTAGE Trains is offering the chance to travel to either York or Scarborough on Saturday, July 4.

'The White Rose to York and Scarborough' tour is planned to be hauled by one of Vintage Trains' Castle 4-6-0s, either No. 7029 *Clun Castle* or No. 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe*.

Beginning from Birmingham New Street, the tour will pick up additional passengers at Coleshill Parkway, Tamworth, Burton-on-Trent and Derby, from where it will take the Cross Country route via Sheffield and Leeds to the first stop of York.

Passengers will have five-and-a-half hours to explore the city or the chouce to travel on to Scarborough for three hours there. There is also an option for passengers to book just the part of the journey between York and Scarborough.

Having departed Scarborough in the late afternoon, the tour will return to York before making the return journey to Birmingham over the same route.

Tickets are available in several classes, with discounts for junior travellers and families. For details and to book, visit vintagetrains.co.uk

Jeremy Hosking's 'The Chairman's Train' up for charter

By Robin Jones

BRITAIN'S only privately-owned main line train will soon be available for hire – from £45,000 per day.

On May 18, 'The Chairman's Train,' described as the UK's most private luxury rail experience, was formally unveiled at Euston.

Owned by businessman Jeremy Hosking, chairman of Locomotive Services Group, it is designed to host groups between two and 16 people on tailored journeys hauled by steam or heritage electric and diesel locomotives on the UK network.

LSG managing director Tony Bush said: "This represents something truly special for Britain's railway heritage and for luxury travel alike.

"We have taken immense pride in restoring these remarkable carriages with absolute respect for their history, while reimagining them for a new generation of travellers who value privacy, craftsmanship and authenticity."

Jeremy added: "'The Chairman's Train' is the UK's first fully private heritage train for exclusive use. It offers a personalisation unmatched in modern travel.

"Whether your passion is cathedrals, castles, gardens or golf courses, then, together with our off-train colleagues, we can make it happen! Every element, from route planning, dining configurations, entertainment and pace, is individually tailored.

"For five years now, we have been investigating the art of the possible from St Ives to John O'Groats, and from quiet overnight stops to places of interest throughout Britain.

"Journeys can vary from single day escapes to multi-night odysseys on Britain's unique and evocative railways."

Roaming residence

A distinctive feature of 'The Chairman's Train' is that it offers a moving residence shaped entirely around its guests. Drawing rooms are upholstered in deep velvets, panoramic observation cars frame the shifting landscape, suites are finished with handcrafted marquetry, fine linens and walk-in showers, a pianist sets the evening's mood in the bar car, and a dedicated chef creates menus inspired by the regions unfolding beyond the windows.

A LSG statement said: "Every carriage has been meticulously restored to honour the romance and craftsmanship of the golden age of rail. Polished brass, soft lamplight and hand-finished upholstery sit harmoniously alongside discreet modern comforts, creating an environment that feels both nostalgic and unmistakably contemporary. For multi-day itineraries, the experience extends beyond the main train. *Flora* – the train's dedicated Class 121 'bubble car' No. 55022 – ventures along remote branch lines and into scenic and historic locations unreachable by standard services. Guests stay both on board and at hand-picked properties along the route, allowing the journey to unfold within landscapes, rather than simply pass through them."

The train's inaugural season begins in July with a five-day curated West Highland Experience, followed by a further departure in August.

The curated journey through the West Highlands is designed to immerse guests in the region's raw beauty, with opportunities for intimate off-train exploration and overnight stays.

This inaugural experience will set the foundation for the train's future: from 2027, guests will be able to commission entirely bespoke routes, from coastal escapes to heritage-rich journeys throughout the UK.

This year, all departures will start from Euston, with plans to leave other London terminals on future journeys.

Full day charters start at £45,000, with a £25,000 additional daily fee for overnight stays. A multi-day tour will be priced according to the customer's chosen locomotive, destination and duration.

➜ **For more information, email enquiries@thechairmanstrain.com**

Class 121 'bubblecar' No. 55022 *Flora*, part of 'The Chairman's Train' package, at Hellifield on May 18. CHRIS GEE

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

LNER Peppercorn A2 4-6-2 No. 60532 *Blue Peter* heads 'The Chairman's Train' press launch trip from Euston on May 18. Passengers alighted at Hellifield and boarded the dedicated 'bubblecar' *Flora* for the leg to Carlisle while the A2 hauled the empty coach stock there. The final destination was Kilmarnock, returning to London behind Class 90 No. 90002 *Wolf of Badenoch* the following day. CHRIS GEE

'The Chairman's Train' drawing room. TCT

The club car, with a steward in service. TCT

The observation window of the Zanzibar car. TCT

End of Southern steam special to take *Clan Line* back to Weymouth in July

By Tim Hobman

THE Railway Touring Company has announced a trip to Weymouth to mark the end of steam on the Southern Region, with a tour from London on Thursday, July 9 titled of 'The End of Southern Steam'.

Starting from London Victoria behind Merchant Navy Pacific No.35028 *Clan Line*, the tour is scheduled to take the South Western Main Line at Byfleet Junction and pick up additional passengers at Woking and then Basingstoke.

Taking the West of England Line at Worting Junction, the tour will pass through Andover and Salisbury before the single-track section at Wilton Junction, as the train crosses Salisbury Plain bound for Templecombe. Passing through Templecombe and over the track bed of the former Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, the tour is scheduled to head through Sherborne and on to Yeovil, where the Merchant Navy will be uncoupled for servicing at the Yeovil Railway Centre.

Leaving Yeovil Junction diesel-hauled, the tour is planned to run south through Maiden Newton and Dorchester, to Weymouth. Here, passengers will have just over two hours to explore the seaside resort before the return journey to London.

Leaving Weymouth steam-hauled, the train is expected to take a different route back to the capital, via Bournemouth, Southampton and Eastleigh, before heading back to Basingstoke and then Woking to set down passengers. From Woking, the final leg of the trip will see the train terminate at Waterloo instead of Victoria.

Tickets are available in Premier Dining, First Class and Standard Class, with a discount for junior travellers and family bookings on this tour.

For more details and to book, visit www.railwaytouring.net

Tornado attends opening of new station in its birthplace

By Robin Jones

Darlington-built A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* stands in the town station's new Platform 6 on May 15, watched by members of the Band of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. A1SLT

DARLINGTON'S railway heritage and future came together on May 15 as the completion of the town station's two-year £140 million upgrade was celebrated.

The centrepiece of the occasion saw the Azuma train *Darlington* – named during the Railway 200 celebrations last year – arrive at the new Platform 5 before taking guests on a special inaugural journey to York.

The platform will primarily be used by services connecting the town with King's Cross and destinations on the East Coast Main Line.

Meanwhile, A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* – arguably the town's finest individual transport engineering project of the 21st century, which was completed in 2008 and reached 101mph during a test run on the East Coast Main Line on April 12, 2017, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 228 – stood in Platform 6 in steam and on its way to York, ahead of meeting A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* for the pair's journey to Ruddington.

The project, delivered by LNER, Network Rail, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Darlington Borough Council and the Department for Transport, saw the station enter a new phase for the ECML following one of the most significant station investments in recent years.

With the majority of operators now under public ownership, Great British Railways branding features throughout the station, showing how the rail network is being brought together to work as one organisation, ending years of fragmentation and delivering a joined-up railway for the first time in decades. In addition to the two new platforms, the transformation includes a spacious eastern concourse and a fully accessible elevated walkway linking to the existing Grade II-listed station building, which has also been given a facelift with a modernised western entrance.

The station has new retail outlets, customer information screens featuring British Sign Language interpretation, an LNER Travel Centre, and a multi-storey car park with more than 600 spaces, including accessible bays and electric vehicle charging points. New cycle routes and secure bike shelters have also been introduced, while multiple lifts, escalators and stairways have been installed to improve accessibility.

The station was officially opened by Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy, who said: "Darlington's station redevelopment with the new platforms is a great example of what the future of Great British Railways holds – essential upgrades making journeys easier, more reliable and better connected as we move towards a railway that puts passengers first.

"With £113 million of Government backing, this investment will boost growth, jobs and homes across the Tees Valley and the North East, and paves the way for stronger links across the North, with Darlington providing a critical gateway to the North East."

The official opening was also celebrated with a performance by the Band of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

LNER managing director David Horne said: "More than 200 years after the railway story began in Darlington, this transformation marks an exciting new chapter for the town and its people. Darlington is now the fastest growing station on the LNER network, with more and more customers choosing to travel from here each year."

Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy at the official opening on May 15. LNER

The new entrance to Darlington station. LNER

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Marathon *Tornado* trip to celebrate Settle & Carlisle 150

By Robin Jones

NEW-BUILD A1 Peppercorn Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* will head Vintage Trains' new 'The Great Northern' railtour on Saturday, September 26.

The 'triple whammy' route combines the Settle to Carlisle line in its 150th anniversary year, the Tyne Valley, and East Coast Main Line in a single day.

'The Great Northern' will depart from Birmingham New Street early in the morning and return later that evening.

The tour heads north through the East Midlands and Yorkshire before joining the Settle to Carlisle for the climb to Carlisle. It then continues east via the Tyne Valley to Newcastle, where *Tornado* heads south along the East Coast Main Line before handing over to diesel haulage for the run back to the Midlands.

Passengers will experience the Settle to Carlisle route as it was always meant to be travelled: behind steam, in period carriages with table seating throughout and large picture windows framing the changing scenery throughout the day. For those travelling in the Pullman dining coaches, there will be fine dining and proper glassware, all while the views roll past the window, said a VT statement.

The Tyseley operator describes the combination of *Tornado* with the Settle to Carlisle and ECML running as one of the highlights of its 2026 programme.

VT managing director Nick Ralls said: "*Tornado* on the Settle & Carlisle in its 150th anniversary year is a combination that deserves to be marked properly. We're very pleased to be making it happen."

Passengers can join at Birmingham New Street, Coleshill Parkway, Tamworth, Derby or Wakefield Kirkgate.

Tickets are available from £125 per adult in standard class. First class seating starts at £240, Pullman dining at £355 per person, and private first-class compartments for up to four people at £1080. A family table of four in standard class is £395. All prices exclude booking fees.

➜ For tickets and further information visit vintagetrains.co.uk/the-great-northern/

Hastings Diesels schedules 'English Riviera Express' summer trip to Torbay

By Tim Hobman

ON Saturday, June 20, Hastings Diesels will run its third trip of the 2026 season, this time to Paignton under the title of the 'English Riviera Express.'

Starting from Hastings as a 10-coach train made up of both a six-coach and a four-coach DEMU, it is scheduled to pick up additional passengers at St Leonards Warrior Square, West St Leonards, Crowhurst, Battle, Etchingham, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge.

From Tonbridge, the tour will head via Godstone to Redhill for a reversal and to pick up more passengers, before taking the North Downs Line via Dorking Deepdene to Guildford for another passenger pick-up.

Staying on the North Downs Line and heading northwest via Blackwater and Wokingham, the tour is scheduled to pick up the Great Western Main Line at Reading, where customers will have the last opportunity to join the train.

Heading south-west through Hungerford and Westbury on the Reading-Taunton Line, the route is planned to join the Bristol-Exeter Line at Cogload Junction and head via Taunton and Tiverton Parkway to Exeter St Davids. Customers will have the option to alight here and spend four hours exploring the city. After leaving Exeter, the train will join the South Devon Main Line to run along the sea wall at Dawlish, before heading inland via Newton Abbot and on to Paignton.

Passengers will have about three hours in the seaside resort before the return journey via the same route, setting down passengers at their joining stations. Tickets are available in First-Class and Standard Class.

➜ Book at www.hastingsdiesels.co.uk

Class 207 'Hastings' DEMU is seen at Cove Bay just south of Aberdeen on May 23 during its first-ever trip to the Scottish Highlands. The trip ran in aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital, the acronym of which led to the tour's name of the 'G.O.S.H Ness Montster,' which departed from Tonbridge for Polmadie on May 22, with a day excursion to Inverness on the Saturday and returning south the following day. TREVOR GREGG

Luxury 'Blue Pullman' HST trip heads for Yorkshire coast

MIDLAND Pullman is giving two more chances to visit the Yorkshire coast onboard its luxury HST set.

On Wednesday, July 1, the 'Yorkshire Coast Pullman' from Chelmsford will head north on the Great Eastern Main Line for further passenger pick-ups at Colchester, Manningtree, Ipswich and Stowmarket.

Shortly after Stowmarket, the train will take the line towards Ely to pick up passengers at Bury St Edmunds and Ely. From here, the route is set to be towards March and then Peterborough, picking up passengers at both locations.

Instead of heading directly north on the East Coast Main Line, the tour is scheduled to take the Stamford Line for the final passenger pick-up at Stamford. Heading towards Birmingham, the train will take the Cross Country route to York, offering passengers five hours in the city or, alternatively, three hours in Scarborough. The tour is planned to take the same route back to Chelmsford.

On Wednesday, August 12, the 'Yorkshire Coast Pullman' will start from Paignton on the Riviera Line. Passengers can join at Torquay, Newton Abbott, Dawlish or Exeter St David's, Tiverton Parkway, Taunton, Bridgewater and Bristol Temple Meads. Taking the Cross Country route at Bristol, the final passenger pick-up is expected to be Bristol Parkway, before heading north east towards York.

Locomotive Services Limited's Midland Blue Pullman HST short set, comprising Nos. M43058 *Loch Eil* and M43059 *Loch Shiel,* heads west past Coryton Cove at Dawlish in full sun with the down 1Z12 6.35am York to Penzance 'Cornish Riviera Pullman' on May 15. THOMAS MILLS

Once again, passengers have the option to alight at York for five hours or continue on to Scarborough. Tickets are available in either Pullman dining or First Class non-dining for all three tours.

➜ For more details and to book, visit midlandpullman.com

Tour to celebrate United States engineering firm's input to UK rail

By Tim Hobman

UK Railtours has announced a tour on Saturday, July 4 under the title of 'Independence Day' to celebrate the contribution to the British rail industry by US manufacturer General Motors, whose Class 59s were introduced into service 40 years ago.

It is also 250 years since the Declaration of Independence was signed, so the tour is expected to take a US theme, featuring an onboard beer festival and buffet car serving some American favourites.

Starting from Finsbury Park, the day begins with an 'empty' coaching stock move of Mk. 2 carriages into King's Cross for those who fancy some extra traction in the form of a Class 57/3.

From King's Cross, the train is scheduled to be hauled by a Class 69 and head north on the East Coast Main Line for further passenger pick-ups at Potters Bar, Stevenage and Peterborough. After leaving Peterborough, the train is expected to take the line to Spalding and Sleaford and then turn west through Rauceby and Ancaster, before passing beneath the ECML and picking up the Nottingham-Grantham Line.

Sheffield bypass

The final passenger pick-up point will be Nottingham, before the tour will run a short distance to Toton to exchange locomotives in the Toton Up and Down Independent.

With a Class 66 in charge, the tour will leave Toton bound for Chesterfield, then bypass Sheffield to join the London to Leeds Main Line at Moorthorpe Junction.

Heading through Wakefield Westgate and avoiding Leeds station, the tour will run via Whitehall Junction and into Hunslet Down Reception Loop, where another Class 66 is planned to take over the train.

It is hoped that this 66 will be one that has never worked a passenger train.

The route to Doncaster is planned to be via Castleford and Gascoigne Wood, then across the East Coast Main Line, heading towards Selby.

Taking the Canal Goods Curve, the tour is booked to arrive in Doncaster for an afternoon break of about two hours.

Departure from Doncaster is planned with a different Class 66 locomotive in charge as the train heads back to Toton. Joining the line towards Gainsborough, it is scheduled to take the freight curve at Pyewipe Junction and join the Lincoln-Newark Line.

After setting down passengers at Nottingham, the tour will next head to East Midlands Parkway for another opportunity for passengers to alight, and then a reversal to gain access to Toton yard.

The plan here is to exchange the Class 66 for the original Class 69 locomotive for the journey home.

Charity fair

The route back to the capital is planned to be along the Midland Main Line as far as Syston Junction and before taking the line via Melton Mowbray, Oakham and Stamford to Peterborough. After setting down passengers at Peterborough, the tour will take the East Coast Main Line south, setting down passengers at Stevenage and Potters Bar, before arrival at King's Cross.

UK Railtours will make a donation to Martin House Children's Hospice as part of this tour.

Tickets are available in First Class Non-Dining and Standard Class, with a discount for junior travellers in Standard Class.

For more details and to book, visit www.ukrailtours.com

Gloucester station scale model brings history to life in the waiting room

GLOUCESTER station has been recreated in miniature inside the waiting room of the full-size version.

The detailed display, unveiled by the Mayor of Gloucester, Coun Ashley Bowkett, recreates the station across multiple eras, from the steam age of the 1880s to the present day, celebrating 200 years of the railway.

Funded by a £1000 grant from Great Western Railway's Customer and Community Improvement Fund, the project took 12 people one year to complete.

The display includes miniature scenes of everyday life at the station, featuring intricate details including customers, hand-painted signs, milk pails from the days of the dairy trains and even a roaming cat. A cleverly placed mirror creates the illusion of a continuous stretch of track that travels through time, linking the past and present.

Coun Bowkett said: "It is a fine example of what can be achieved when organisations such as GWR work in partnership with local community groups like the Gloucester Model Railway Club.

"Supported by the 2025/26 Community Connectivity Improvement Fund, this project celebrates the heritage of Gloucester station while also recognising the club's wider social value in bringing people together, supporting mental wellbeing, and fostering friendship and inclusion among members of all ages."

Mayor Coun Ashley Bowkett unveils the Gloucester station model in the waiting room. GWR

The club's Laurence Pegrum said: "This project has been a labour of love for many of us.

"We hope the diorama will encourage people to get into model building, and we welcome people of all ages, backgrounds and skills."

Freshly-overhauled LMS 'Black Five' 4-6-0 No. 44871 catching the sun near Staveley while heading for Buxton with the Railway Touring Company's 'The Buxton Spa Express' from Ealing Broadway on May 16, with steam haulage between Leicester and Buxton. ROBERT FALCONER

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Steam out of London's Waterloo is rather uncommon, but Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35028 *Clan Line* departed from there on May 23 with Railway Touring Company's 'Atlantic Coast Express' to Exeter St Davids, retracing some of the route run by the original named express service in SR and BR days. The train dwarfed by the high-rises surrounding Covent Garden Flower Market at Nine Elms junction. OWEN HAYWARD

Portishead reopening takes a major leap forward

By Robin Jones

MOVES to reopen the GWR Portishead branch to passengers after 60 years took a major step forward on May 1 when three contracts worth £200 million to deliver the project were signed at Bristol Temple Meads.

Morgan Sindall Infrastructure will lead the construction of the line and highways improvements at Portishead, Colas Rail will design and install a new digital signalling system, and AmcoGiffen will deliver bridge works and associated highways work in Bristol.

The core work involves building two new stations, relaying three miles of track and delivering the infrastructure needed to run a modern reliable rail service along a corridor that has been dormant for generations.

This project is funded by the Department for Transport, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset Council and will be delivered by Network Rail.

Construction is now underway, and once opened in the winter of 2028/29, the line will reconnect more than 50,000 people to the railway for the first time since it closed to passengers services in 1964, improving access to jobs, education and services while supporting more sustainable travel options.

Site visit

To mark the contracts being signed, invited guests boarded a special train from Bristol Temple Meads along the line towards Portishead and the location of the new Pill station. Guests included the Mayor of the West of England, Helen Godwin; North Somerset Council leader Mike Bell; Network Rail Western route managing director Marcus Jones; Great Western Railway managing director Mark Hopwood; Karin Smith, MP for Bristol South; Kerry McCarthy, MP for Bristol East; and Sadik Al-Hassan, MP for North Somerset.

Marcus Jones said: "This is a significant milestone in the return of the railway to Portishead and Pill, and a proud moment for everyone involved in bringing this scheme to life. With these contracts now signed, we're moving from years of planning into full delivery."

Helen Godwin said: "This is an historic moment for Portishead, Pill and the whole of the West of England as we continue to grow our regional rail network and look to increase the frequency of trains across the board.

"We can connect more people to work, nature, and leisure. This investment will also help unlock sites for new homes and strengthen the country's fastest-growing regional economy.

"Travel times between Bristol and Portishead will be halved by train services, helping the West get out of the slow lane and cutting congestion."

Mark Hopwood said: "This isn't just about trains and track – it is about reconnecting people to rail and providing a vital economic catalyst across the region.

"This project validates our belief that reliable rail services are essential for local and national growth."

In Portishead, site compounds are now being established off Harbour Road and off the A369 Portbury Hundred. Work will soon begin to remove what remains of the old railway and prepare the line for new track.

In Pill, site compounds are being constructed off Monmouth Road and at Lodway, near the hammer and spanner sculpture.

Station House will soon be demolished to make way for the new station forecourt. Garages off Avon Road will then be demolished, creating the work area to renew the railway bridge and reinforce the adjacent embankment.

Survival story

The branch was built by the Bristol and Portishead Pier and Railway Company to Brunel's 7ft 01/4in broad gauge and opened in 1867. It was converted to standard gauge in January 1880.

Passenger services were ended under Beeching, and while all traffic ceased in 1981, the line was not dismantled.

As part of the GWR's 150th anniversary celebrations in spring 1985, a series of both steam and diesel trains were operated on it from Bristol Temple Meads.

During 2000/1, the branch was rebuilt as far as Pill and a short spur constructed to the Royal Portbury Docks to carry freight again.

June

5 'The Growling Peak'
Linlithgow to Carlisle only.
Loco: 37025 *Inverness TMD*. SRPS

6 The Golden Age of Travel by Steam
Circular tour of Kent from London Victoria.
Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. BEL

6 Settle & Carlisle Steam Special
Coventry, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
Loco: Steam: 34067 *Tangmere*. NB

6 'The Aberystwyth Coastal Voyager'
Euston, Aberystwyth, and return.
Locos: 86259 *Les Ross* + Class 37 & Class 97 TBC. RTC

6 'The Coast to Coast Express'
Liverpool Lime Street, Scarborough, and return. Diesel-hauled from Milton Loop to Liverpool (return only).
Loco: TBA (WCR Carnforth). RTC

6 'The Oban Peak'
Carlisle, Oban, and return.
Loco: 45118 *The Royal Artilleryman*. SRPS

7 'The Return Syphon'
Carlisle to Falkirk Grahamston only.
Loco: 37025 *Inverness TMD*. SRPS

11 'The Dalesman'
Chester, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Hellifield and Carlisle.
Loco: 'Black Five' TBC (WCR Carnforth). WCR

12 'The Cathedrals Express'
Birmingham Snow Hill, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and return.
Loco: 7029 *Clun Castle*. VT

13 Settle & Carlisle Steam Special
Manchester Victoria, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
Loco: Steam: 34067 *Tangmere*. NB

13 'The Portsmouth Flyer'
London Victoria, Portsmouth, and Southsea and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA (WCR Southall). RTC

13 Cambridge & Ely Excursion
Haywards Heath, Ely, and return. Steam-hauled between West London and Ely.
Loco: 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. SD

17 'The Keighley Artilleryman'
Linlithgow to Keighley only.
Loco: 45118 *The Royal Artilleryman*. SRPS

17 'The Scarborough Spa Express'
Carnforth, Scarborough, and return.
Loco: 'Black Five' TBC (WCR Carnforth). WCR

20 Kingswear Excursion
Hastings, Kingswear, and return.
DEMU: 1001. HD

20 'The Cumbrian Mountain Express'
Euston, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
Loco: Steam: 34067 *Tangmere*. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC

20 Kingswear Excursion
Waterloo, Kingswear, and return. Steam-hauled between Taunton and Kingswear.
Loco: 61306 *Mayflower*. SD

125 Group Class 43 HST power car No. 43025 *Exeter*, in InterCity Swallow livery, heads past Caldecote on the West Coast Main Line with the Branch Line Society's 1Z39 'North-South Connection' railtour on May 1, which ran from Manchester Victoria to Reading. The rear power car was 43159 *Rio Warrior*. GRAHAM NUTTALL

21 'The Shakespeare Express'
Birmingham Snow Hill, Stratford-upon-Avon and return.
Loco: 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* or 7029 *Clun Castle*. VT

22 'The Keighley Stag'
Keighley to Falkirk Grahamston only.
37025 *Inverness TMD*. SRPS

24 'The Welsh Marches Express'
Paignton, Shrewsbury and return.
Loco: TBA (LSL Taunton). ST

27 'The Cumbrian Coast Express'
Euston, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth and Carlisle.
Loco: Steam: 34067 *Tangmere*. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC

27 'The Mazey Day Cornishman'
Dorridge, Penzance, and return.
Locos: 2x Class 37s TBC. RTC

July

1 'The Fellsman'
Crewe, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Chester and Carlisle.
Loco: 60532 *Blue Peter*. ST

4 'The Tynesider'
King's Cross, Morpeth, and return. Steam-hauled York-Morpeth.
Loco: Steam: TBA (WCR Carnforth). Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC

4 'The Lakelander'
Nottingham, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Preston and Carlisle.
Loco: TBA (LSL Crewe). ST

4 'The White Rose'
Birmingham New Street, York, and return.
Loco: 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* or 7029 *Clun Castle*. VT

7 'The Dalesman'
York, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Hellifield and Carlisle.
Loco: 'Black Five' TBC (WCR Carnforth). WCR

8 'The William Shakespeare Express'
Barrow-in-Furness, Stratford-upon-Avon, and return. Steam-hauled between Crewe and Stratford.
Loco: TBA (LSL Crewe). ST

9 The End of Southern Steam
London Victoria, Yeovil Junction, and return.
Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. RTC

11 'The Cumbrian Mountain Express'
Crewe, Carlisle, and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
Loco: Steam: TBA (WCR Carnforth). Diesel: Class 47 TBA. RTC

11 'The White Rose'
King's Cross, York, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 34028 *Eddystone*. RTC

11 'English Riviera Express'
High Wycombe, Kingswear, and return. Steam-hauled between Taunton and Kingswear.
Loco: TBA (LSL Taunton). ST

11 'The Cathedrals Express'
Birmingham New Street, Liverpool Lime Street, and return.
Loco: 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* or 7029 *Clun Castle*. VT

12 'The North Wales Coast Express'
Liverpool Lime Street, Holyhead and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA (WCR Carnforth). RTC

15 'The Scarborough Spa Express'
Lancaster, Scarborough, and return.
Loco: 'Black Five' TBC (WCR Carnforth). WCR

16 'The Spirit of Summer Lunch'
Circular tour of the Thames Valley from Paddington.
Loco: 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. SD

16 'The Sunset Steam Express'
Circular tour of the Thames Valley from Paddington.
Loco: 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. SD

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 londonthepolar expressride.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
UKRT	UK Railtours 01438 715050
VT	Vintage Trains 0121 708 4960
WCR	West Coast Railways 0333 996 6720

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.

18 'The Waverley Merrymaker'
Crewe, Edinburgh Waverley, and return.
Loco: D213 *Andania*, 45118 *The Royal Artilleryman*. IC

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KIRKBY STEPHEN EAST

'JUMPSTART THE JUNCTION' SIGNAL BOX APPEAL

PLEASE HELP US REBUILD THE JUNCTION BOX

The stunning rebuild of the 1861 S&DR box is complete; the next stage is to rebuild the later and larger Junction Box.

Beginning: Rebuilding the Signal Boxes

As expected, the 1861 box and the wider signaling project has prompted enthusiasm for the rebuilding of the larger Junction Box. Its return would superbly finish the station layout and complement the fantastic 1861 box.

We have already started construction this year following generous donations but we need to raise a lot more.

Please join our 'Jumpstart the Junction' appeal – THANK YOU.

Photograph by John Boyes

YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION IN A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WAYS:

Go to our blog at: https://ksesignalling.blogspot.com/2025/08/jumpstart-junction.html

BY DIRECT BANK TRANSFER BY BACS TO OUR BANK ACCOUNT

This method reduces bank charges on card payments. Please make sure that you quote reference JTJ/& your surname when making the payment to our Nat West account. Account No: 78581257 Sort Code: 51-70-15

Reference JTJ/(surname). Please complete and return the donation form for Gift Aid purposes.

BY CHEQUE

Please ensure that you complete the donation form and return it with your cheque made payable to:

Locomotive Conservation & Learning Trust, c/o Manor Cottage, 1 West End, Sedgefield, Stockton-on-Tees, TS21 2BW.

The donation form for gift aid purposes can be downloaded or requested in hard copy from the Sedgefield address or via the email below.

CONTACT - To find out more about the project and levels of support to help us, email us at: lclt.chairman@gmail.com

LET'S FINISH THE JOB!

JOIN THE 876 CLUB TODAY AND HELP US TO RAISE THE LAST £65,033 TO RETURN LNER CLASS J21 TO STEAM

Following the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and our generous supporters, the Locomotive Conservation & Learning Trust is nearing the completion of the restoration of class J21 No. 876 (later BR No. 65033). Built in 1889 and preserved in 1962, the 'Stainmore Survivor' last steamed in 1984. The extensive restoration No. 876 has been underway since 2014 at a total estimated cost of £650,000.

The condition of the locomotive has been far worse than we expected which has increased the time and cost of the project but we are now on the home stretch and about to finally reassemble it. To return this unique and wonderful locomotive to steam we now need to raise the remaining £65,033 to finish the job. Please help us by joining the 876 Club.

REGULAR PROJECT UPDATES ON OUR BLOG: https://ksetransport.blogspot.com

Benefits of joining The 876 Club:

• A supporters' pin badge • A monthly newsletter • An invitation to our annual Supporters' Day
• Two tickets for the launch event for No. 876's return to steam • A day's footplate experience on No. 876, learning to drive and fire it

Membership of The 876 Club is available for either a single donation of £876, or a 10 monthly-instalments of £87.60. To join please:

• Use either the PayPal link or download the form at **www.lclt.org.uk**
• Email the LCLT at **lclt.chairman@gmail.com**
• Or else to find out more how you can help, contact the LCLT at:
LCLT Chairman, Stone Flagged Cottage, Newbiggin, Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 3TD

GET ON-BOARD TODAY AND HELP US TO RETURN THE STAINMORE SURVIVOR TO STEAM!

WITH FULL REGULATOR

LOCOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE THEN AND NOW

In his latest column, **Don Benn** shows the detail of more pure steam on the main line with Peppercorn Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* working a recent 'Shap Mountaineer' and then compares lively runs by BR 7P Pacifics No. 70000 *Britannia* and 70010 *Owen Glendower* from 2026 and 1967 respectively.

THIS time I start with the morning 'Shap Mountaineer,' which departed Birmingham New Street on Saturday, March 28 at 6.32am for Carlisle behind A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado*. The section from Barton Loop to Carlisle is set out in Table One and the return over the S&C in Table Two.

Both are described by my good friend Sandy Smeaton, who writes: "This Vintage Trains day out to the Fells was worked by A1 *Tornado*, which was operated from Tyseley. The outward route was Birmingham New Street to Carlisle via the WCML and the return via the S&C. The load was 11 vehicles, including the water carrier, 387½ tons tare and about 430 gross. Class 47 D1755 was on the rear until Crewe and came back on at Blackburn on the return. The path to Warrington and on to Barton were uninspiring; 51 minutes for the first 24 miles and 54½ minutes for the second 31. However, the climb through Wigan to Coppull was unchecked. Springs Branch Jn was passed at 67½mph, Wigan at 63mph, Boars Head at 50½mph and Coppull Summit 52½mph.

"At Acton Bridge, there had been a pathing stop to allow Railway Touring Company's 'Cumbrian Mountain Express' to overtake. At Carnforth, Battle of Britain light Pacific No. 34067 *Tangmere*, with 11 on and a Class 47 at the rear, would precede to Carlisle with a margin of about five minutes throughout, so there was no point in being early at Carnforth and as a result, 65mph was not exceeded before Lancaster. Carnforth was passed right time at 74mph, falling to 63½mph at MP9½. The maximum before Milnthorpe was 71½mph, falling to 54mph at Oxenholme, 50½mph at Lambrigg and a minimum of 46½mph at Grayrigg. Acceleration through the Lune Gorge produced a maximum of 75mph at MP31½, 68mph at MP33¼, 51½mph at MP35 and a minimum of 41½mph in the Summit cutting. The Summit was passed 10 minutes early. The 'CME' had passed the Summit nine minutes early according to Realtime Trains.

"The run down to Carlisle included a visit to Upperby Goods Loop to let the 9.30am from Euston overtake and the 'CME' vacate Platform 3; final arrival at Carlisle was three minutes early. Of three previous runs with *Tornado* over Shap (on September 21, 2011, July 5, 2014, and September 16, 2017), the second was the best. The minimum at Grayrigg was an excellent 53mph, 77mph at MP31½ (eased from 79mph) and 43mph at MP37¼.

TABLE ONE: BARTON LOOP TO CARLISLE

Date	Saturday, March 28, 2026
Train	6.32am Birmingham New Street to Carlisle
Loco	A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado*
Load	11 coaches, 387½ tons tare, 430 tons gross
Driver/fireman	M Fake and S Perry
Recorder	A Smeaton from fourth coach
Weather	Gusty west wind, heavy showers after Hest Bank

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Barton Loop	0.00	0.00	00	00	4 early
Brock	2.90		05	29	54
Garstang	4.96	7.00	07	40	58½/53
MP 13	8.46		11	28	55½
Bay Horse	10.71		13	46	62
Galgate	12.14		15	07	65
MP 19	14.46		17	21	58/57
Lancaster	16.40	16.30	19	16	69
Morecombe S Jct	18.37	18.30	20	55	72½
Hest Bank LC	19.59		21	57	70½/69½
Bolton-le-Sands	20.84		23	02	70
Carnforth	22.70	24.00	24	36	74
MP 6¾	23.20		25	00	76½
MP 8	24.45		26	02	69
Yealand Smt	25.95		27	24	63½
Burton	27.20		28	31	71/69½
MP 12	28.45		29	35	70½/71½
Milnthorpe	29.99		30	55	65
Hincaster Jct	31.95		32	50	60
MP 16½	32.95		33	50	59½/61
MP 18	34.45		35	21	56/53
Oxenholme	35.57	39.00	36	35	54
MP 20	36.45		37	35	53/50½/51
MP 21	37.45		38	45	50½/49
Hay Fell	38.95		40	34	50
MP 23¾	40.20		42	04	51½
Lambrigg	40.70		42	39	50½
MP 25	41.45		43	34	49½
MP 26	42.45		44	48	46½
Grayrigg RR	42.62	48.30	45	01	46½
MP 27	43.45		45	59	56½
MP 29	45.45		47	57	66
Dillicar	46.45		48	49	72
MP 31½	47.95		50	32	75
Tebay South	48.45	56.00	50	28	73
MP 33¼	49.70		51	32	68
MP 34	50.45		52	14	60½
MP 35	51.45		53	19	51½
MP 36	52.45		54	32	45½
MP 37	53.45		55	56	42
FB	53.73		56	19	41½
Shap Summit	53.95	66.00	56	39	42½
Summit Sign	54.07		56	48	44½
MP 39	55.45		58	24	60½
Shap Blg	56.18		59	05	64/62½
Harrisons Sdgs	58.12	70.00	60	53	68/72½
Thrimby Grange	59.45		62	02	72
MP 44	60.45		62	51	74½
Bessie Ghyll	61.29		63	32	71/74
Clifton	63.59		65	26	71½
Eden Valley Jct	64.45		66	09	72½/66
MP 50	66.45		67	55	67½63½
Penrith	67.70	79.00	69	03	65
MP 55	71.45		72	20	74
Plumpton	72.45		73	08	70½/69
Calthwaite	74.84		75	12	71½/72
Southwaite	78.02		78	03	70½/72½
Wreay	80.64		80	05	72/73
Upperby Bridge Jct	84.20	97.00	85	51	19½*
Down Goods Loop	84.47	104.00	87	22	17 early at
		107.00	104	10	pathing stop
Carlisle	85.55	112.00	109	45	3 early

* speed restriction

Right: A1 Peppercorn Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* at Carlisle on March 28, 2026, with Vintage Trains' 'Cumbrian Mountain Express.' SANDY SMEATON

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No. 70000 *Britannia* at Crewe with the 'Shap Mountaineer' on April 8. SANDY SMEATON

The load again was 11 carriages. The weather had been unkind in 2011, causing slipping, while the 2017 run was interrupted by an out-of-course stop at Oxenholme. The run described here was not quite up the standard of the one in 2014.

"The return departure from Platform 3 was just under five minutes late after waiting for the 2.34pm Glasgow-Euston service to depart south, which was 3½ minutes late. Speed reached 33mph at Scotby before the now long-standing speed restriction at Cumwhinton dictated a reduction to 16mph, incurring a loss of 3½ minutes on schedule at Low House. Speed was more or less at the S&C's low 60 limit, then on to Appleby, which was passed marginally over the 43 minutes allowed from Carlisle. The maximum before Ormside was 62½mph, falling to 48½mph at Griseburn and recovering to 56½mph after Crosby Garrett.

"Another cruel restriction at the south end of Birkett Tunnel brought speed down to 19mph again. The recovery from this was excellent, requiring up to 2000edbhp to reach 46mph before Ais Gill Summit. Hellifield was approached about nine minutes late, so we were stopped to let the 4.48pm Leeds-Carlisle service pass north.

"Whalley was passed only three minutes late; the 30mph restriction over the viaduct was observed just as a foul shower engulfed us, causing some slipping when attempting to accelerate up the 1-in-88. However, *Tornado* recovered after falling slightly to 25½mph to reach 29mph at Langho. The ¼-mile at 1-in-68 at Wilpshire Tunnel brought speed down to 20mph before easing over the Summit for a check before Daiseyfield Jn. Blackburn Goods Loop was reached three minutes late.

"D1755 came onto the rear at Blackburn and consequently the run on to Crewe was not timed. According to RTT, we left Blackburn Down Goods Loop only a minute late, but after a very cautious run down to the WCML, Farington Jn was passed 10 minutes late, which increased to 12 by Euxton Jn. Arrival at Warrington was 10 and Crewe eight minutes late."

Brit over Shap

Moving on to Wednesday, April 8, the latest 'Cumbrian Mountaineer' was handled by BR Standard Class 7 No. 70000 *Britannia,* which only had eight coaches for 290 tons; Tables Three and Four show the detail. Alongside the detail of No. 70000 in Table Three is a run I timed on the 10.55am Euston to Barrow on Saturday, August 26, 1967, with No. 70010 *Owen Glendower*. Remember that some of the timing points may be in slightly different locations to the current ones shown in the first part of the table.

With 10 coaches for 355 tons of old stock, we had left Euston with Class 86 E3176 10 minutes late due to waiting for the guard. This ran well and was unchecked as far as Stafford, passing Watford Junction in 14m 56s, Bletchley in 34m 3s and Rugby in 59m 50s before signal checks and a stop outside Crewe, which was reached in 124m 15s, net 114 minutes for the 158 miles from Euston. We left Crewe 14 minutes late.

The highlight of the run with No. 70010 was the superb and noisy climb to Boars Head, which I have on tape and CD. We picked up over eight minutes on the schedule despite a number of checks. This enthusiastic crew, with a locomotive in fine form, turned in a net time of 54 minutes. The good work continued when we left Preston just over five late on the slow line, though we encountered a series of signal checks until being turned fast line at Barton. We then had a fine spell with speed in the mid-70s before finally arriving at Lancaster eight minutes late. This was where I left the train to go to Penrith for No. 70039 *Sir Christopher Wren* on the 2pm from Glasgow back to Preston.

Returning to Tables Three and Four, Sandy tells the story of a day which did not end as planned: "*Britannia* was turned out for this, the last of the spring series of return trips from Crewe to

NO. 60163 (MARCH 28, 2026) POWER OUTPUTS

WCML Down

Between mileposts	Gradient (1 in)	Power (Edbhp)
32½-33¼	137	1830
33¼-34	76	1780
34-35	"	1770
35-36	"	1940
36-37	"	2020

NO. 60163 (MARCH 28, 2026) POWER OUTPUTS

S&C Up

Between mileposts	Gradient (1 in)	Power (Edbhp)
268-267	100	1540
263½-263	302	1850
263-262	100	2160
262-261	100	1980
261-260	98.3*	1900
Between locations		
OB36-OB35	88	1220
OB35-Whalley	88	1400

TABLE TWO: CARLISLE TO HELLIFIELD

Date	Saturday, March 28, 2026
Train	3.50pm Carlisle to Birmingham
Loco	A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado*
Load	11 coaches, 387½ tons tare, 430 tons gross
Driver/fireman	A Meanley/G Bunker-James
Recorder	A Smeaton from fourth coach
Weather	Occasional heavy showers

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Carlisle P3	0.00	0.00	00	00	4½ late
Petteril Bridge Jct	0.81	5.30	05	08	15½
MP 308	1.96		08	02	30½
Scotby	2.61		09	16	33
MP 305	2.96		09	53	31½
MP 304½	3.46		11	13	15* tsr
Cumwhinton	3.81		12	16	23½
MP 304	3.96		12	37	24
Howe & Co	4.96	12.00	14	30	38½/39½
MP 302	5.96		16	03	38½
Cotehill	6.96		17	36	37½
Buttress Wall S	7.65		18	43	36½
Wallace Field	8.04		19	21	42
Low House SB	8.27	16.00	19	40	46½
MP 299	8.96		20	29	55/56
Armathwaite	9.85		21	27	53/59½
MP 295	12.96		24	45	54
OB 312	14.01		25	50	62/63½
Fiddlers Lane OB	14.58		26	22	63
Lazonby	15.36	24.00	27	08	57½/58/57
MP 291	16.96		28	50	57½
Little Salkeld	18.26		30	10	58½/55½
Langwathby	19.69		31	40	56½
MP 287½	20.46		32	27	62½/58½
Culgaith SB	23.28	33.00	35	16	62
New Biggin	24.61		36	39	58
Kirkby Thore	26.22		38	16	60
Long Marton	27.76		39	50	58½
OB 245	29.20		41	24	51½/48½
Appleby	30.71	43.00	43	07	57
MP 276	31.96		44	24	62½
Ormside	32.96		45	21	62
MP 274	33.96		46	20	57½
MP 273	34.96		47	27	51½
Griseburn	35.96		48	39	48½
MP 271`	36.96		49	51	51½
MP 270½	37.46		50	26	52
Crosby Garrett	38.21	51.00	51	18	53
MP 269	38.96		52	08	56½
MP 268	39.96		53	14	51½
MP 267	40.96		54	28	46½
Kikby Stephen	41.38	54.00	55	01	45
MP 266	41.96		55	46	47
MP 265	42.96		57	06	44
Birkett Tunnel N	43.44		57	45	
Birkett Tunnel S	43.68		58	10	19* tsr
MP 263¾	44.21		59	42	25½
MP 263½	44.46		60	14	32½
MP 263	44.96		61	02	42
MP 262	45.96		62	23	45½
MP 261	46.96		63	41	46½
MP 260	47.96		64	59	45½
Ais Gill Summit	48.21	64.00	65	19	47
Lunds	50.21		67	40	55/55½
Garsdale	51.28	66.00	68	50	52
	Not shown for lack of space				
Hellifield	76.65	97½	104	07	

* speed restriction

The 'Shap Mountaineer' passes through Ais Gill on March 28 with *Tornado* at the helm – its only main line tour so far this year. SHEP WOOLLEY

TABLE THREE: CREWE TO BARTON LOOP/PRESTON

Date	Wednesday, April 8, 2026					Saturday, August 26, 1976			
Train	10.35am Crewe to Carlisle					10.55am Euston to Barrow			
Loco	BR Class 7 Pacific No. 70000 *Britannia*					BR Class 7 Pacific No. 70010 *Owen Glendower*			
Load	Eight coaches, 279 tons tare, 290 tons gross					10 coaches, 325½ tons tare, 355 tons gross			
Driver/fireman/TI	M Searston, J Gresty, J Humphries								
Recorder	A Smeaton, GPS from eighth coach					Don Benn, stopwatch from front of train			
Weather	Dry, mostly sunny, light breeze					Fine			
	miles	**sched**	**mins**	**secs**	**speed**	**sched**	**mins**	**secs**	**speed**
Crewe	0.00	0.00	00	00	½ early	0.00	00	00	14 late
Coal Yard SB	0.84	4.00	02	49	39		02	56	34/40½
OB 7	2.20		04	30	56		sigs		27*
MP 161	2.99		05	19	60½/62½		06	00	37
MP 162½	4.49		07	04	38* sigs				49
MP 163	4.99		07	46	46½		08	41	52½
Winsford	7.46	10.00	10	17	71½		11	17	61½
Winsford SB	8.81		11	28	61*/26* sigs		12	31	63
Hartford	11.84		16	20	35* sigs		15	22	60
Acton Bridge	14.50	18.00	19	33	60½		17	59	66½
Dutton Viaduct	15.94		20	56	65½				
Weaver Jct	16.49	21.00	21	26	59½/58½		19	29	73/67½
MP 176	17.99		22	58	63½/68½		21	00	70
Norton	19.49		24	20	64		22	13	76
MP 179	20.99		25	43	66½		23	26	74
Acton Grange Jct	22.15	27.00	26	48	59/61½		24	27	63
MP 180¾	22.74		27	24	60				54½
Warington BQ	24.14	28.30	28	43	66½65½		26	29	60/56½
MP 184	25.99		30	25	66/65½		28	25	60
Winwick Jct	27.49	31.30	31	47	67/66		30	02	61
MP 186¾	28.74		32	55	67/68/66½		pws		46*
Golborne Jct	30.08	34.00	34	08	68		32	59	40
Haydock Branch	31.79		35	39	66				47/60
Lily Lane	33.29		36	58	68½/63		pws		39*
Springs Branch Jct	34.54	38.30	38	08	66½		38	32	46
Wigan N.W.	35.91	39.30	39	22	68½/70		40	18	50
UB 48	36.94		40	15	68				48
Rylands FB	37.36		40	37	67				47½
OB 51	37.68		40	54	65½				46½
Boars Head	38.04		41	14	65		43	02	46
MP 9½	38.79		41	55	67½/68½		43	47	46
MP 11	40.29		43	15	67½		45	40	54½
Coppull Summit	40.79		43	41	65½/73		47	10	56
MP 13½	421.79		45	25	68½		pws		19*
Balshaw Lane	44.29	47.30	46	41	73½		51	51	55
Euxton Jct	45.79		47	42	70½	60.00	53	08	62½
Leyland	47.00		48	55	77		54	30	68½
MP 20	49.29		51	22	31/34/18*		56	42	61
Preston	51.01	56.30	55	17	32½*	68.00	59	54	5¾ late
MP 2	53.00		57	59	52/15* sigs				
Barton Loop	55.50	65.00	64	04					
	* speed restriction					* speed restriction 54 minutes			

Carlisle, with a load reduced to eight coaches, 279 tons tare and about 290 gross. The TSO was full, but the FOs were not.

"Departure was right time and the usual checks from the preceding 9.34am Birmingham-Liverpool were experienced. Braking on the approach to Weaver Jn reduced speed from 65½mph to 59½mph, probably to prevent exceeding the limit around Norton. From Warrington we ran in the mid-60s to Wigan, passed at 68½mph, rising briefly to 70mph, then passing Boar's Head at 65mph and Coppull Summit at 65½mph. This was a fine climb, but not quite as fast as No. 71000 in November. Accelerating through Preston, the exhaust produced a fine echo under the station roof. Barton loop was reached with a minute in hand. After taking water, the restart from Barton was four late due to the 11.04am Manchester Airport-Glasgow working, curtailed to start at Piccadilly, running five late. Britannia reached 70mph at MP8½ and held this more or less to Oubeck. Morecambe South Jn and Carnforth were passed at 78mph, with a touch of the brake after the latter to keep within the limit. The climb to Yealand produced a minimum of 65½mph, rising to 75mph before an annoying restriction at Milnthorpe. The 'Brit' recovered from 46½mph at Milnthorpe to 56½mph at Hincaster Junction and to 61mph at MP16½, but on the approach to Oxenholme the regulator was shut and we stopped at Signal CE38 to request permission to enter the Down loop; the right-hand big end had run hot and so No. 70000's day out ended.

"Rescue came in the form of Class 37 No. 37409, which had been at Upperby waiting to assist with the shunt at Carlisle. After leaving the loop, a stop in Oxenholme was arranged for those who saw no point in continuing sans steam to turn back. For the rest, it was not what was paid for, but it would be my first run over Shap behind a Class 37. Departure was 104 minutes late with a load

"The highlight of the run with No. 70010 was the superb and noisy climb to Boars Head, which I have on tape and CD."

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Smoke and steam aplenty on April 13, 2019, as an immaculate *Britannia* waits at Crewe to take a Saphos Trains charter forward. DON BENN

of seven, reaching 54mph at MP24 before being signalled into Grayrigg loop to let a TransPennine Express working pass north. Escape from the loop was given after 3¼ minutes, now 108 minutes late. At the north end of the Lune Gorge, the maximum at MP31½ was 76mph, eventually falling to 42mph at MP37¼. With no need for the Penrith water stop, arrival at Carlisle was reduced to 68 minutes late.

"The practice with the steam-hauled trips was to turn the whole set via the Upperby triangle, but No. 37409 propelled its train into Platform 4 without having turned the stock. Departure was on time. After reaching 62mph at Southwaite, the driver braked to 50mph, which I assume was a running brake test. Calthwaite was passed at 59½mph and MP55 at 70mph. The maximum after Penrith was 75½mph, falling to a minimum of 54½mph at Harrison's, followed by 56½mph at MP38¼ before the Summit. However, having run up to 72½mph before Scout Green, No. 37409 was brought to a stand at MP32½ to eventually be declared a failure also. It seems that climbing Shap twice in one day was just too much for it. LSL's Class 20s, D8096 and D8107, had earlier been sent to Oxenholme to retrieve No. 70000 and were diverted to Tebay. They coupled onto the front of the Class 37 and then moved south into the Up and Down goods loop to let two services pass south. We moved out of here 98 minutes late. Little hard work faced the Class 20s before Crewe, even with the addition of No. 37409's 105 tons to the load, now totaling 347 tons tare. A set-down was arranged for Preston to provide connections for those travelling beyond Crewe. Arrival there was 56 minutes late. When Network Rail had discovered No. 37409 had failed, blocking the Up main, they had immediately stopped all following trains.

"The lateness at Crewe of the four Glasgow and Edinburgh departures to Milton Keynes and Rugby respectively ranged from 90 to 44 minutes. It would be an expensive day for LSL."

Next time I will catch up with some steam runs from the recent past, plus an extraordinary run with a Class 47. HR

TABLE FOUR: BARTON LOOP TO OXENHOLME

Date	Wednesday, April 8, 2026
Train	10.35am Crewe to Carlisle
Loco	BR Class 7 Pacific No. 70000 *Britannia*
Load	Eight coaches, 279 tons tare, 290 tons gross
Driver/fireman/TI	M Searston, J Gresty, J Humphries
Recorder	A Smeaton, GPS from eighth coach
Weather	Dry, mostly sunny, light breeze

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Barton Loop	0.00	0.00	00	00	4 late
Barton	0.25		01	18	20
MP 6	1.50		03	22	50
Brock	2.94		04	52	64½
MP 8½	4.00		05	49	70
Garstang	5.00	7.00	06	40	70½/69½
MP 11	6.50		07	57	70½
MP 12	7.50		08	48	73
MP 13	8.50		09	38	71
Bay Horse	10.75		11	34	69
Galgate	12.18		12	48	69½
Oubeck	13.30		13	44	72½
MP 19	14.50		14	47	65/59½
MP 20	15.50		15	48	63½
Lancaster	16.48	18.30	16	35	72
MP 1¼	17.74		17	38	78
Morecombe S Jct	18.41	20.30	18	08	78
Hest Bank LC	19.53		19	06	75½
Bolton-le-Sands	20.88		20	07	72½
MP 5¾	22.24		21	15	74½
Carnforth	22.74	25.00	21	39	78
MP 7	23.49		22	14	74
MP 8½	24.99		23	30	68
MP 9	25.49		23	57	66½
Yealand Smt	25.99		24	24	67½
Burton	27.24		25	27	75½/75
MP 12	28.49		26	27	75½
MP 13	29.49		27	20	59
Milnthorpe	30.03		27	58	46½* tsr
MP 14	30.49		28	33	49½
Hincaster Jct	31.99		30	14	56½
MP 16½	32.99		31	16	61
Sedgwick	33.47		31	45	61½
MP 18	34.49		33	41	13½
			stop		
Signal CE38	34.66		34	50	0*
			35	58	
Oixenholme Loop	35.27	38.00	40	02	

* speed restriction

***Tornado* leads the 'Shap Mountaineer' at Greenholme.** SHEP WOOLLEY

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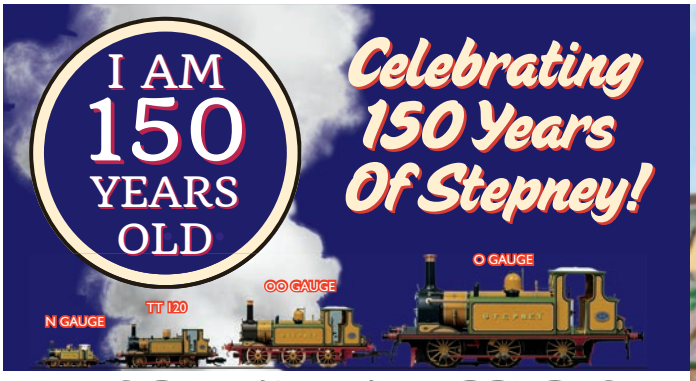

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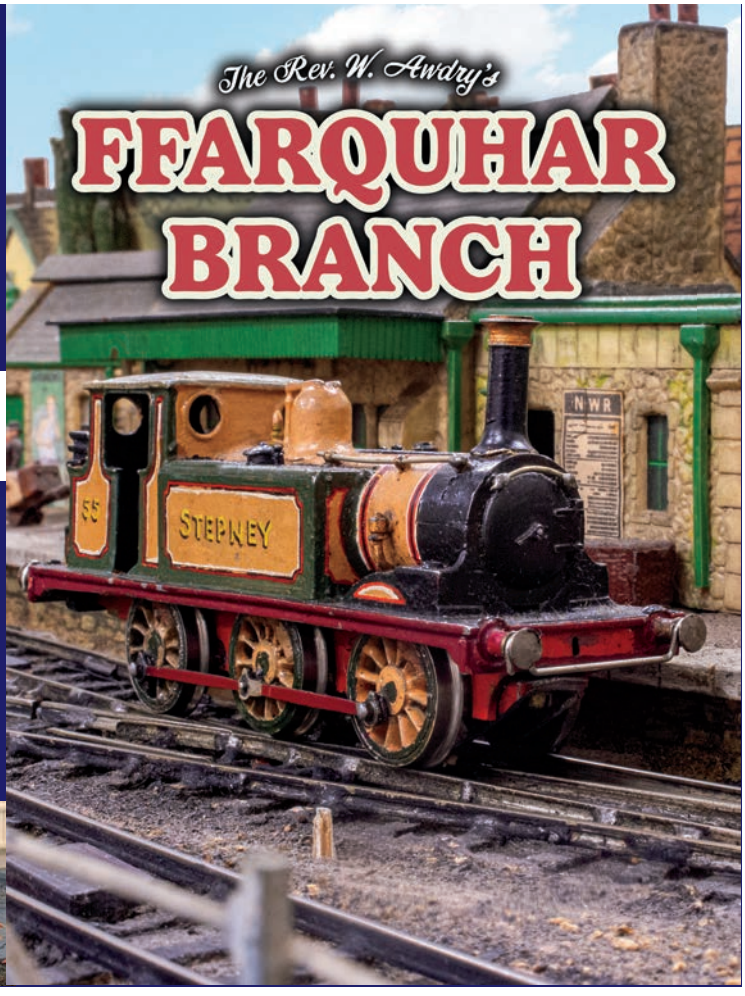

SURPRISE COTSWOLD COMEBACK FOR 'FIFTEEN GUINEA' 'BLACK FIVE'

Famous for heading the last BR main line passenger train in 1968, after nearly two decades out the limelight, No. 45110 made its operating comeback at the eagerly-awaited Cotswold Festival of Steam at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, which took place in heatwave conditions on May 23-25, reports **John Titlow.**

The Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway held its annual Cotswold Festival of Steam gala during the May 23-25 bank holiday weekend. An intensive timetable was drafted up, comprising locals services, shunting demonstrations, goods and full-line passenger trains – but matters did not go according to plan. It was complicated by a May record heatwave, a lineside fire, points failure, late running and several locomotive failures.

The home fleet and some of the guests were announced well in advance, but the final addition to the line-up was not disclosed until just three days beforehand. Secrecy was the byword for the last visitor, which caught most by surprise. LMS 'Black Five' No. 45110 arrived on a low-loader at Toddington on May 20 from West Coast Railway's Carnforth base after its recent overhaul and following limited testing inside the MPD. This was an incredible scoop on behalf of the G/WR, with the locomotive re-entering service and pulling passenger trains for the first time in 18 years.

Built by Vulcan Foundry in 1934, it entered service at Holyhead the following year as LMS No. 5110 and was renumbered 45110 by BR in 1949. For 29 years, it was shedded at Holyhead, followed by allocations to Stafford, Bolton, and finally Lostock Hall. No. 45110 achieved fame by becoming the last BR-owned steam locomotive to be used on the national network. On August 11, 1968, it hauled the last leg of the 'Fifteen Guinea Special,' bringing the curtain down on regular steam haulage on BR and securing its place in railway history.

Saved for preservation by the Stanier Black Five Locomotive Preservation Society, it was hauled dead in 1969 from Lostock Hall to Clapham Sidings before heading south to the former BR Ashford shed, where it was steamed on open days. With heritage lines still in their infancy, a permanent home

LMS 'Black Five' 4-6-0 No. 45110 departs Toddington for Broadway on its first passenger train after overhaul on May 23. JOHN TITLOW

'Black Five' No. 45110 exits Greet Tunnel with a freight working on May 24. OWEN HAYWARD

Battle of Britain Pacific No. 34070 *Manston* departs Winchcombe with a passenger service beneath the azure skies of the heatwave. JOHN TITLOW

was needed, and it arrived under steam on the Severn Valley Railway in 1970, entering service that same year. In 1971, it was named *RAF Biggin Hill*.

In 1975, it was bought by the SVR, where it underwent retubing and general repairs. Withdrawn in 1980, its next major overhaul began in 1986 – but it was not until 1998 that it finally steamed again. It made a welcome return to the main line during this period, working until 2008. After the expiry of its boiler certificate that year, it went on display at Barrow Hill Roundhouse until 2013, and then moved into the Engine House Visitor & Education centre at Highley. In 2018, it was displayed at Kidderminster to take part in the 'Last Days of Steam' event, which marked the 50th anniversary of the end of BR steam haulage on the main line.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 310, in 2023 it was controversially sold by the SVR to help offset rising costs. At Carnforth, it has been fully restored to working order, albeit it currently without air-braking or any main line equipment. Provided that all goes well, No. 45110 could be running services through the Cotswolds for much of the remainder of the year.

Ecclectic mix

No. 45110 joined a line-up of guests including Bulled Battle of Britain light Pacific No. 34070 *Manston*, appearing courtesy of Southern Locomotives Ltd, Caledonian

Early morning on Toddington shed with Nos. 45110, 3850 and 2807 raising steam on May 23. JOHN TITLOW

Above: Unusual bedfellows on Toddington shed with GWR railcar No. 22, GWR 0-4-0ST No. 229 and No. 78022 behind. JOHN TITLOW

Right: GER 0-4-0ST 'Coffee Pot' No. 229 performs shunting duties at Winchcombe on May 23. JOHN TITLOW

Caledonian Railway 429 class 0-4-4T No. 4198 in LMS crimson lake livery as No. 15189 departs Toddington for Broadway with the local service, prior to its failure, on May 23. JOHN TITLOW

GER 0-4-0ST 'Coffee Pot' No. 229 leaving Toddington with a passenger service on May 23. As reported last month, No. 229 hauled what was believed to have been its first passenger train since 1916 during its 150th birthday celebration at Beamish Museum on April 2. JOHN LEWIS

Railway 439 class No. 419, which is now resplendent in striking crimson lake livery as LMS No. 15189 and visiting from the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway, BR Standard 2MT 2-6-0 No. 78022, from the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, and recently restored Great Eastern Railway No. 229 'Coffee Pot,' courtesy of The Flour Mill. One non-steam participant which fitted in very well was GWR railcar No. 22, from Didcot Railway Centre.

From the resident fleet came Great Western 2-8-0s Nos. 2807 and 3850, plus new-build 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange*.

In total, eight locomotives ran throughout the weekend, with Nos. 45110, 15189, 34070 and 6880 facing north, thus enabling different photographic opportunities to usual. Facing south were Nos. 3850, 2807, 78022 and 229. Locomotive directions were clearly marked in the timetable, along with the four rakes of coaches in use.

Nos. 3850, 2807 and 78022 were all rostered to haul the freight and brake van rides, available on a first-come, first-served basis for an additional fare. These proved very popular, particularly when the star 'Black Five' put in an unexpected appearance to work the set on Saturday afternoon.

The 2ft gauge Toddington Narrow Gauge Railway saw steam in the form of *Justine,* an attractive 0-4-0WT built by Arnold Jung in Germany in 1906. Journey time along this short line is about 25 minutes, which includes a 10-minute stop at California Crossing, giving time to visit the signalbox, engine shed and garden railway. In the car park, trade and locomotive owning group stands were set up and selling their wares.

Broadway station signalbox, the only on-platform 'box on the heritage line and which was rebuilt to the design of the one at Shirley on the North Warwickshire Line, was open to visitors for the festival weekend only. Passengers could look underneath at the lever frame and interlocking frame which is nearing completion.

Hayles Abbey Halt had limited trains stopping, enabling passengers to walk to nearby photographic locations.

Toddington saw a Battle of Britain Memorial flypast take place on May 23, when a Second World War Spitfire circled three times over the station at about 2pm, flying north to south, and a Dakota fulfilled the same role the following day.

The engine sheds at Toddington were open to view current locomotives under overhaul, including WR 4-6-0s Nos. 7903 *Foremarke Hall*, 7820 *Dinmore Manor*, GWR 2-8-0 heavy freight No, 2874 and Bulleid Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35006 *Peninsular & Oriental S.N.Co.*

Meanwhile, at Winchcombe, the Carriage & Wagon workshops were also open to view ongoing projects. A viewing area beyond the workshops had been fenced off, enabling visitors to photograph arrivals to and departures from the station. On Platform 2, the model railway and discovery coaches were open, while a 1940s US Army encampment added further interest.

The private station grounds at Gotherington, opposite to the running line, was open by special courtesy of its owners, Bryan and Savita Nicholls. They provided homemade curries, plus pump trolley or Wickham trolley rides along a relaid part of the former goods yard.

This was an excellent spot for viewing the trains, and the Battle of Britain Memorial Fly past over Toddington circled Gotherington 10 minutes later.

At Cheltenham Racecourse station, the original 1912 ticket office was open, and the shuttle bus linking to Cheltenham Spa main line station departed and arrived there.

Adding to the event this year was the new steam and vintage rally Steam at Stanway, featuring traction engines and rides all taking place opposite the station cottages at Toddington.

Extreme heat takes its toll

Trains started at 8.20am on the Saturday from Toddington to the Racecourse behind *Manston*, or to Broadway at 8.25am behind

Surprise star guest No. 45110 pilots No. 6880 as they run into Greet Tunnel, approaching Winchcombe, on a very warm May 23. JOHN TITLOW

Above: Proudly displaying its Cotswold Festival of Steam headboard, *Justine* performs a runpast on Toddington's narrow gauge. JOHN TITLOW

Right: GWR 2-8-0 No. 3850 runs into Toddington from Broadway with the goods as BR Standard 2MT 2-6-0 No. 78022 sits on the local service in the loop. JOHN TITLOW

No. 45110. However, both ran late, with problems compounded by a points failure at Cheltenham Racecourse which was eventually sorted, but the timings never recovered.

With the timetable slipping further as the day progressed, the Caley tank's air pump (which controls the loco brake) failed, and it had to be withdrawn. The projected double-headers never happened, apart from Nos. 45110 and 6880. In an attempt to get matters back on track, some local services and goods trains were cancelled.

Sunday fared no better, with S&T failures at Gotherington affecting trains from the very start. Further late running was compounded by a medical emergency at Racecourse in the afternoon, where a fireman was suffering from the effects of the hot weather.

No. 6880 also failed, and at one point, no trains moved for more than an hour. On the upside, after many hours of hard work, No. 15189 was repaired and made a reappearance on one round trip with a team having come from Scotland to fix it.

As a result of the issues from the previous two days, Monday's timetable was reworked to afford better reliability, and it was Kids Go Free day. The Caley tank also ran again.

Spokesman Ian Crowder said: "The entirely volunteer team pulled out all the stops despite the difficulties, such as the points failures and that of the Caley tank.

"Visitors were generally understanding of the difficulties being faced. Trains ran, of course, although not necessarily in the right order. There was a token issue at Gotherington on the Sunday morning and the Caley tank was still a failure.

"We had a revised timetable for Monday, which was a very wise thing to do. The gala committee worked tirelessly in the face of so many challenges, and with even higher temperatures expected, volunteer and passenger welfare had to be our top priority. A lot of people worked until midnight to pull this off and get printed timetables to the stations."

Operations director Michael Bell commented: "I'd like to take a moment to thank all personnel who were involved in delivering the steam gala over the weekend.

"It was a particularly challenging event with high temperatures pushing our staff and infrastructure to their limits." HR

New-build GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange* crosses Stanway Viaduct with the 9.56am Winchcombe to Broadway service on May 24. ANTHONY GALES

'Black Five' No. 45110 passes through Stanton Cutting en route from Toddington to Broadway on May 23. MARTIN CREESE

BR Standard 2MT 2-6-0 No. 78022 runs into Toddington from the loop with a local service. JOHN TITLOW

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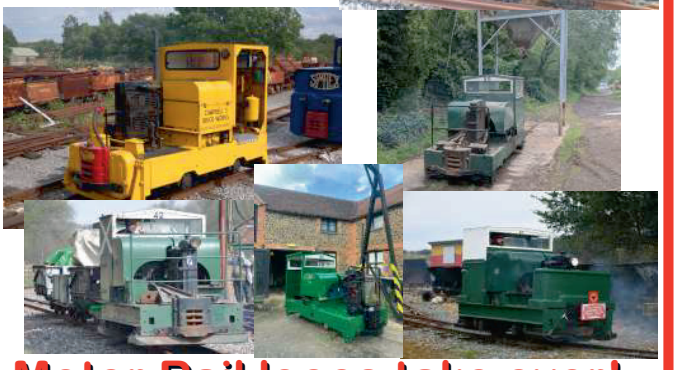

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From pre-Grouping era to heritage modern at GWRA

IN a display of inclusivity across the board, steam nameplates from the pre-Grouping era, all the post-Grouping 'Big Four,' and BR, will be jockeying for position in GW Railwayana's two-day July 18/19 auction, while heritage modern traction will also be fancying its chances of making a name for itself.

Where to start in a list of more than a dozen plates that will undoubtedly be bolstered by as yet unknown additions? Yes, at the beginning is always a good idea, but is the starting line age, alphabetical or numerical order, or some other criteria? Right, age has it, so that means a start with GWR name, number, and works 'combine' from No. 3342 *Bonaventura*, a Bulldog 4-4-0 that emerged from Swindon in August 1900 and was withdrawn in October 1938.

Thence attention turns to the LMS with a pair of Royal Scot class engines, Nos. 46116 *Irish Guardsman* and 46160 *Queen Victoria's Rifleman*, built respectively by North British Glasgow in October 1927 and Derby in August 1930, and withdrawn in August 1963 and May 1965. The smokebox numberplate from No. 46116 will join its matching nameplate in the auction.

A return now to the GWR and to *King William III* from No. 6007. The first engine to carry this name and number was built at Swindon in March 1928 but was written off in a fatal accident in January 1936. It was replaced in very short order by a newly-built King that was given the same name and number and was in traffic until September 1962. The cabside numberplate from this engine will also be in the auction.

A duo of Hall class plates, comprising *Hazel Hall* (No. 5901, built May 1931 and withdrawn June 1964) and *Bickmarsh Hall* (from March 1937-built, June 1964-withdrawn No. 5967), complete the newly announced GWR contingent, and *Eastbourne* from Schools class No. 30914, built at Eastleigh in December 1932 and withdrawn in July 1961, will wave the SR flag.

Identity crisis

From the LNER will be *Gannet*, *City of London* and *Impala*. The first is from A4 No. 60032, which was constructed at Doncaster in May 1938 and withdrawn in October 1963, and *City of London* is from B17 No. 61670, which suffered an identity crisis very early in its life. This 4-6-0 was outshopped by Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns in May 1937 carrying the name *Manchester City*, but within days was renamed *Tottenham Hotspur* and four months later *City of London*, which it carried until withdrawal in April 1960. One can only speculate as to why the men in grey suits who were responsible for choosing locomotives' names sometimes acted in such strange and mind-changing ways. Oh, to have been a fly on the wall during meetings.

Thirdly from the LNER is *Impala*, carried by B1 No. 61002, a Darlington September 1943 product that was pensioned off in June 1967. Jumping onto my nameplate hobby horse again, that name is at least understandable and pronounceable, unlike some others close by in the B1 'antelope' section.

BR got it right with the Britannia names, and from this sector comes *Tornado* from No. 70022, one of the class's Western Region locomotives.

This Pacific, which was built at Crewe in August 1951 and withdrawn in December 1967, first entered my logs during a seven-hour trainspotting spell at Reading General on August 29, 1958, mid-morning on the Up 'Capitals United Express' and 4½ hours later on its return to South Wales with a Down train.

Among heritage modern traction are representatives of four classes, comprising Classes 42, 43 and 52 D806 *Cambrian*, D841 *Roebuck*, and D1068 *Western Reliance* with cabside, and Class 45 D98 *Royal Engineer* with crest.

Further details of the two-day auction will be published in next month's *Heritage Railway* railwayana column.

Q7 is head of the queue at Thirsk sale

AN LNER 9x5 workplate from Darlington 1924-built No. 63468, one of 15 members of the 0-8-0 Q7 class, was the joint top seller in a Thirsk Railwayana sale on April 18 with a realisation of £250, a price matched by a North British Railway locomotive plate numbered 23436/1926.

An ex-Hornsey station booking hall 13in drop dial clock sold for £240, a collection of BR diesel locomotive slides for £230, and a second LNER 9x5 workplate, from 1907 Doncaster-built N1 class 0-6-2T No. 69434, fetched £210. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 12% (+ VAT).

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Electric models charge to the top

FOUR electric O-gauge models made by Hornby and Leeds Model Company topped the charts with four-figure realisations in Lacy Scott & Knight's monthly sale on April 28. Heading the quartet was a 1930s Hornby LNER D49 4-4-0 No. 234 *Yorkshire*, which sold for £2700, followed by a similar vintage Hornby D49 No. 201 *Bramham Moor* at £1300.

Close behind was a 1925-35 LMC 4-4-2 in LNER livery numbered 1453N that fetched £1250, and completing the four-figure selection was another 1930s Hornby model, an LMS 0-4-0T No. 16045, which went for £1100. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 22½% (+ VAT).

A gauge one live steam model of GWR 0-6-0PT No. 6752 made by Aster of Japan was the top model in a Vectis auction two days later on April 30, when it went under the hammer for £950 (excluding buyer's premium of 22½% + VAT). On the following day, May 1, a selection of O-gauge models produced by Ace Trains of London lived up to their name by selling for up to £650 each in a collectables auction held by Bedford's W & H Peacock. The leader of the pack was LMS Princess Coronation Pacific No. 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland*, followed by Co-Co diesel No. 10000 (£500) and, at £480 each, SR No. 453 *King Arthur* and 9F 2-10-0 No. 92220 *Evening Star*. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 17½% (+ VAT).

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And that makes it a round dozen for GCRA thanks to the GWR and LNER

TWO GWR Hall nameplates, a pair from the LNER D49 class, and a BR Standard have been added by Great Central Railwayana to its June 6-8 auction, bringing to 12 the line-up as of early May. The seven plates unveiled early doors and listed in last month's column comprised a Hall, Castle and King from the GWR, a SR Schools and a King Arthur, an LMS Jubilee, and a BR 'Brit.'

To those have now been added *Liddington Hall* and one of its cabside numberplates from No. 4938 and classmate *Owsden Hall,* also with cabside, from No. 6984, *Hertfordshire* and *The Puckeridge* from LNER D49 Nos. 62703 and 62770, and *Excalibur* from Standard Class 5MT No. 73081.

No. 4938 was built at Swindon in June 1929 and withdrawn from Llanelli (87F) in December 1962, and No. 6984 at Swindon in February 1948, making it a BR-constructed locomotive by two months. Withdrawal from Bristol Barrow Road (82E) was in December 1965, meaning its 17 years and nine months in GWR and BR service was only a little over half of that of classmate No. 4938.

A snapshot of BR history concerning No. 6984 makes interesting reading and is a stark reminder of the headlong, almost manic rush to remove main line steam from the landscape. This locomotive was noted as one of more than 200 ex-BR withdrawn engines awaiting their fate at Woodham's scrapyard on July 7, 1968, a list that included, among other classes, 17 Halls, five Castles, two Kings, eight Manors, no fewer than 18 West Country/Battle of Britains, 11 Merchant Navy Pacifics – oh yes, and No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. All consigned to history and unwanted by the nationalised BR hierarchy. Progress? Agreed. Sad? Certainly, although in mitigation, a number of them were ultimately rescued for preservation.

Anyway, back to the here and now, or rather the here and now of yesteryear. No. 62703 was built at Darlington in December 1927 and withdrawn from Hull Botanic Gardens (53B) in June 1958, No. 62770 was constructed at Darlington in December 1934 and withdrawn from York (50A) in September 1959, and No. 73081 at Derby in March 1955 and withdrawn from Guildford (70C) in July 1966 after a service career of a mere 11 years. The name of this 4-6-0 – albeit not the actual plates – was formerly carried by SR King Arthur No. 30736.

GWR cabside numberplates included in the auction are 1001 from *County of Bucks*, 5009 from *Shrewsbury Castle*, 4989 and 5923 from classmates *Cherwell Hall* and *Colston Hall* and 5080 from Castle class *Defiant*, one of whose nameplates was one of the earlier plates to be announced.

Diesel cabside

This cabside category will also include un-named engines, among which are Nos. 67 and 312 from a pair of 0-6-2 tanks, and this being the GWR, also from a diesel, No. 15101, one of a class of six 0-6-0 diesel shunters built at Swindon in 1948 to an English Electric/ F W Hawksworth design, while the worksplate selection will include a 1928 William Beardmore & Co example (works No. 374) from LMS Class 3F 'Jinty' No. 47626.

Straying from the main line, but returning to nameplates, the evocative name *Brunel* will feature in the line-up. It comes from a standard gauge 0-4-0ST built by Peckett & Sons of Bristol in 1906 for Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal Co that gave six decades of service in the industry before being scrapped on 1966.

Finally, there is *Glastonbury* from an 0-6-0DM built by Hudswell Clarke & Co in 1952 for the Port of Bristol Authority that was scrapped in 1972 and its nameplates transferred to a Yorkshire Engine Co-built 0-6-0DE of 1959, itself then scrapped in 1981.

LBSCR veteran

Bunker numberplate 'Southern Railway W11' will also be a feature. This plate is from an LBSCR A1X Class 'Terrier' 0-6-0T that was outshopped by Brighton Works in March 1878 as No. 40 *Brighton*, renumbered 11 on its transfer to the Isle of Wight in 1901, became W11 in Southern Railway ownership, was returned to the mainland in February 1947 and renumbered 32640 by BR, and was withdrawn in September 1963 after 85½ years service and, as befits such a stalwart, was saved for preservation.

A headboard from 'The Cornishman' will also be going under auctioneer Martin Quartermain's hammer. From 1951-75, this train ran from Wolverhampton to Penzance and Kingswear and was thus a no-show for we London trainspotters, and I logged it just once, the Down working on a busy summer Saturday August 12, 1961, at Exeter St David's. This was, of course, the era of the 'Warship' diesels – my log of that visit tells me that on that day, for example, the Up and Down flagship 'Cornish Riviera' was worked by D823 *Hermes* and D805 *Benbow* respectively – but I am delighted to report that the 'Cornishman' was in the care of No. 5045 *Earl of Dudley*, a Wolverhampton Stafford Road (84A) Castle class 4-6-0.

The auction starts at 10am on each of the three days, and a report will be in next month's railwayana column.

Railwayana Auction Calendar

- **June 6-8**
  Great Central Railwayana
- **June 17**
  Lacy Scott & Knight *(railwayana and models)*
- **June 20**
  Thirsk Railwayana
- **June 24-25**
  Vectis *(model trains)*
- **June 27**
  Transport Auctions of London

Auction debutante makes its winning entrance

NORTH Eastern Region platform totem sign Flamborough, a box-flanged version making its auction debut, was the clear winner of Main Line Railwayana's April 25 online sale when it went under the hammer for £3800, followed by a second totem, BR(W) Aberystwyth, which made £2800.

This runner-up price was matched by nameplate *Finsbury Park* from Class 47 No. 47408, a Co-Co diesel that was built in January 1963 as D1507, named in 1984, and withdrawn in July 1986.

At this juncture, totems made a comeback, with BR(S) Ilfracombe at £2600, and then heritage modern traction returned to the fray in the form of a 1963 English Electric/Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns worksplate from Class 37 D6819/37283, which was withdrawn in February 2003 (£2000).

The totem worksplate yo-yo wasn't finished, however, as next came a BR(E) King's Lynn totem that fetched £1500 and a 1961 English Electric/Vulcan Foundry worksplate from Class 37 D6711/37011, for which the winning bid was £1000.

Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15%.

Nigel Gresley is keeping the steam flag flying

MOST railwayana collectors will remember the not-so-distant days when steam was invariably the champion in terms of both publicity and price. The former, I guess, remains today, but now it's not always the latter, for totem platform signs have risen through the ranks in such an unstoppable way that they frequently muscle into the upper ranks of the realisation charts.

Talisman's May 16 saleroom sale at Newark is a perfect illustration. Steam was still supreme – how could it not be when the Gresley A4 class was involved? – but totems were far from overwhelmed and recorded two of the top four prices.

Lording it overall was a 1937 LNER fully engraved Doncaster worksplate (works No. 1862) from A4 No. 60031 *Golden Plover* that fetched £7200, while another A4 plate, a 1938 Doncaster example (works No. 1868) from classmate No. 60006 *Sir Raph Wedgwood* went for £4300, its lower price reflecting that fact that the plate's LNER identification had been filled in by BR post-Nationalisation.

But that's where totems come in, for BR(S) Shillingstone, from the iconic Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, sold for £6000 to claim the auction's runner-up medal, the sign having been acquired by the vendor's father on the station's closure in March 1966, and completing the top four with a hammer price of £4100 was BR(M) totem Mansfield Town.

Among a busy signs category, an 1895 Cockermouth Keswick & Penrith Railway trespass notice achieved £3300, a BR(W) Goodrington Sands station direction sign £3100, and a Cardiff Railway Co cast iron beware of trains sign £2600, while a SR Clapham Junction target sign went to a new home for £1750.

Onward then to nameplates and *Rood Ashton Hall* from GWR No. 4965, which realised £3500, and *Mount Londiani* with number and bunker plates from East African Railways No. 5924, one of the 34 members of the 59 class 2-8-4+4-8-2 Garretts built by Beyer Peacock of Manchester in the mid-1950s to operate 1200-ton freight trains on the steeply graded Mombasa-Nairobi line (£1000).

Nameplate non-sellers were *Burwarton Hall* (GWR No. 6932) and *The Burton* from LNER D49 No. 62757.

As mentioned earlier, two A4 class worksplates enjoyed themselves under the spotlight, but a more humble and lower-profile example that deserves a mention with a price tag of £2400 is a 1921 LMS Stoke plate from a North Staffordshire Railway L class 0-6-2T, either No. 26 or 29, which became LMS Nos. 2266 and 2267, while from the ranks of heritage modern traction, a 1959 English Electric/Vulcan Foundry plate from D221 *Ivernia* realised £1650.

We travel across the Irish Sea to Belfast to find the cabside numberplate victor at £2600, No. 84 from Northern Counties Committee U2 class 4-4-0 *Lissanoure Castle*, which entered service in May 1905 as No. 20, was renumbered 84 after being rebuilt in December 1929, and was withdrawn in December 1961. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

The fireman of A1X 'Terrier' No. 32640 tops up the water at Portsmouth's Fratton shed on September 5, 1962, when the 0-6-0T was 84 years old, making it one of BR's oldest locomotives in service. The engine started life in March 1878 as LBSCR No. 40 *Brighton* and worked trains on the Isle of Wight from 1901 to 1947, becoming W11 under the Southern Railway, and a bunker numberplate from that era will go under the hammer at a Great Central Railwayana auction on June 6. TRANSPORT TREASURY/NICK NICHOLSON

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DON'T LOOK BACK IN ONGAR

The Epping Ongar Railway's new general manager, Nick Arthurton, has been learning the ropes of the heritage sector after transferring from a more corporate side of the rail industry. Now he's had a few months to settle into his new role, **Owen Hayward** sat down with him to find out what the plans are for Essex's longest heritage railway.

Taking on the role of general manager at a heritage railway can be daunting; it is a sector with many unique challenges, and working with volunteers as a dominating proportion of a workforce is just one of those. Nevertheless, Nick Arthurton appears to be settling in well at the Epping Ongar Railway, having been appointed to the position there last summer. Yet while he comes from a railway background, he had no previous experience working with heritage assets.

"Several generations of my family have worked on the railways in some form or other – there's records of one descendent dating as far back as 1888," he said. "My father spent near enough his whole career working for London Underground. He encouraged me onto a training scheme with the company, and I started my career more on the customer service side than with operations, then was lucky enough to join the team involved with the Jubilee line extension, which was one of the most fun parts of my career to date.

"I left LU in 1999, went backpacking with my future wife for a year, then joined the strategic rail authority and learned commercial management. I eventually came back to Transport for London and effectively set up London Overground, identifying parts of what was a privately-run network that could be passed into ownership of the Mayor of London and raising investment to grow the service and extend trains. I'm very proud of what we achieved.

"One day, I got a call from the managing director of the Elizabeth line project, who asked if I would work as commercial director, which kind of took me full circle, having procured that company back between 2010 and 2015. I was made redundant from the role last May and had a life-changing decision to make: should I do some consulting or try something different? A colleague directed me to the advert for the general manager position here and I thought to myself, 'I want that'. It was a new challenge for me; I'm not really a train buff – I can tell one end from the other, but I'm really interested in business, and this is just that."

Drive up revenue

From the off, Nick has been looking at a hot topic in the sector at the moment: finding new ways to increase revenue and reach new audiences. As I arrived at North Weald to meet him, he was showing around members of a local art society who were interested in a day where they would come, set up, and paint things happening. He has also spoken to someone interested in using the railway as a place for sense-training dogs. Seeing what there is locally and how it can benefit the EOR is something Nick is pursuing.

"I'm keen to improve our working relationships with places such as the North

GWER 4-6-0 No. 4953 *Pitchford Hall* crosses Cripsey Brook Viaduct on the approach to Ongar during the recent steam gala. The difference in external condition between the first and second Mk. 1 carriage is clear to see, and refurbishment of the rolling stock fleet is one of the things Nick is acutely aware of the railway needing to prioritise.

Above: Visiting from Didcot for the summer, Hunslet 0-6-0T No. 2409 *King George* crosses Bridleway Bridge on May 9.

Right: Class 20 D8001 arrives at Ongar on May 9 towing a Class 121 driving trailer. The latter is normally paired with a Class 117 DMU motor car, which is currently undergoing repairs, resulting in this rather unusual combination.

Weald Airfield, Greenstead Church in Ongar or the nearby Secret Nuclear Bunker," he explained. "There are lots of potential hook-ups which could create a stronger critical mass for the area. Individual event sites, particularly where they have a heritage or historical theme, are particularly tricky to sell these days. How do we keep them relevant?

"While we're on London's doorstep, it's still 35 minutes by London Underground from Liverpool Street to Epping and then another 20 minutes to North Weald on our buses.

"In reality, how many people actually live in Liverpool Street? Probably not that many, but there's a good corridor heading eastwards through Loughton and Leyton, where there are much more.

"I'd really like to find a way of tapping into that market, but to get them to look outwards to us here in Essex rather than the other way towards the likes of the West End and all of London, you've really got to have that critical selling point to make them think about what else is out there.

"Are we a day out? What else is there to do? I think this creates the opportunities to work with other attractions and find some common ground, but also maintain our own unique sense of enticement. I'd love them to be going home and thinking about how the EOR was the best part of their day.

"The market is challenged, and people are very careful about how they spend their money at the moment. We saw that here at Christmas; our takings in 2025 were good, but not as much as they were in previous years. Our customers are becoming extremely price sensitive and want a lot of bang for their buck.

"There's a really interesting mantra that resonates with me, which I picked up when I went to meet Steve Green, general manager at Buckinghamshire Railway Centre. He said that they try to organise 20-minute attractions, almost as a sequence whereby family guests come in and do activity A, then after that time has elapsed (about when the children are starting to ask, 'what's next?'), they're naturally moving on to activity B rather than being moved on by us. That really struck a chord. We've got a brilliant experience in riding the train, but it's not enough to keep people here for the amount of time that would generate considerable secondary spend revenue.

"I look at the facilities we have at both our stations, and once you step off the train, I don't feel we're offering enough to keep people here. Our shops are a work-in-progress as far as I'm concerned; our stock must be rationalised, and we have to find ways of presenting them in more attractive ways, such as improving the space (and they are quite constrained), lighting, and flow.

"Our food offer also needs improving. All attractions offer food for two reasons: one is that it is a reasonable and fair way of making a decent profit at a point of sale. If done right, you can add a mark-up which does not leave people feeling they are being impinged upon financially, and we are really sensitive to that. We set our prices very keenly to ensure our customers go away feeling satisfied that they've got value at every point of their trip. What we don't have at the moment is the right space to provide for the second thing: the volume of what you can potentially sell to make money. We're stymied by having a very small space, but the ambience of what we do have isn't particularly satisfactory. It's an outside eating area in a constrained café environment, where you can't really see the food available to buy. There's not a lot of space to prepare that food either, although we are very rigorous about our food hygiene, not just because we must be, but also because it is the right thing to do.

"One of my plans is to find better ways of using our space for secondary revenue

Above: Nick is keen to see the EOR's catering offering expand, although he is aware that the site's limited space restricts what can be done.

Left: "Presentation is key," says Nick. "Having paraphernalia to add to the atmosphere is good, but it must be well-presented and not disrupted by clutter."

Passengers watch the arrival of the DMU at North Weald. To the left is the station's café, the ambience of which Nick admits is currently less than satisfactory for the railway's customers.

Above and below: A pair of RSH 0-6-0ST 'Uglies' are currently undergoing overhaul and will eventually provide two powerful and economical locomotives suited for use on the EOR.

"Surely the right solution is to find ways of driving up revenue by being creative, more imaginative and not repetitive – give people a reason to come back."

The overhaul of GWR large prairie No. 4141 continues. The chassis is at North Weald, while the boiler is at Locomotive Maintenance Services in Loughborough.

Adding activities around the railway will help keep people on site for longer, and thus make them more likely to spend there. Even something as simple as a playground – one of which opened at North Weald last year – can make a difference.

generation; we need to be completely corporate about it and bake that idea into what we must do as a business to survive. We need to measure how we do it rather than treat it as a nice bolt-on.

"It's frustrating when we can't open the café sometimes because we don't have enough volunteers to do so. It's something our customers want, and despite the limitations, we're quite good using what we've got, but it is disappointing that we can't reliably offer to customers that ability to even get a cup of tea. It doesn't happen very often, but when it does, we feel it – our takings can be several hundred pounds lower than any other day."

Management mantra

In terms of steering the EOR, Nick has what he refers to as his three Ss: "The first is to stabilise the business. When I started, nobody knew what the water or electricity bills were. We weren't disconnected, but things were unstable. Our new operations manager, Rob Bentley, also came in to overhaul our safety management system.

"The second S is strengthen, which does have some overlap. I'm trying to build on the things that the EOR does really well; we're very good at running steam locomotives and pretty good at serving food on the train, so long as it's a limited number of portions. Let's take those and see how we develop them to do more of it more frequently and reliably without a drop in quality.

"The third S is sustainability, which will cover a much longer timeframe. We want the EOR to continue for many more years to come. That will cover things like improving our connectivity, such as the long-held ambition for a direct connection at Epping. Several attempts have been made at that but never quite got across the line, and I'm reluctant to start with it until I'm certain we'll have the energy, time and enough resources to complete it. Once it's done, it can never be undone, but getting there in the first place is always the difficult task."

Something that occasionally floats up in local rumour mill is the prospect of the railway running commuter services to Epping – provided a direct link there can be attained. However, while a great idea in theory, the reality is less than simple.

"There is interest locally in creating a public commuter service using the route, but that would be a real challenge to pull off. While we're still keen to create a direct interchange with the Underground at Epping from a passenger conveyance point of view, which would help make us so much more accessible, the cost benefit of anything that connects us as a commuter link is a tricky business case, although if the local council wants to intervene and help, I'd certainly not be against exploring that. Our local councillor has fielded the question, but it is a big investment and there is a lot that would be needed to make it happen.

"The fare would have to be so high to maintain the service at the level of reliability people must have because it forms the start and end of their day and journeys to and from work. You might have, at best, a 45-minute interval between trains, which can have a huge impact if you miss a service or a train is cancelled for whatever reason. There's a bus every 20 minutes from the end of the road, and I think commuters just about tolerate that, but any wait longer, then people would probably just drive.

"The viability of such a service would require a completely different business model. To make it work would be fantastic though, but it's a strain on things such as infrastructure, which would need to be up to spec. You also move out of the standards that regulatory bodies tolerate for heritage into a completely stricter level. That's not to say those safety standards that apply to us aren't low, but the risks associated with the less frequent services of a heritage railway, such as travelling at lower speeds with less insistence on punctuality because events are driven by a sense of occasion, suddenly become important when you start running a public service."

Good impression

One thing Nick has identified as being vitally important is leaving a good first impression, both physically and digitally. "I think at the moment, we're a bit untidy," he confessed. "We've got all these heritage features such as porters' trolleys and luggage on the platform, which are great at enhancing the ambience, but they're next to a stack of traffic cones for parking management or beer barrels from the on-train bar. Our website needs some work too; it's a functional tool, but not a great one. The number of clicks you have to do to navigate from the homepage to buying a ticket makes it too clunky, and I'm already talking to our provider about improvements. I think our overall online presence has improved significantly, though."

Appearance also extends to rolling stock, of course. With it now being 14 years since the current iteration of the EOR opened, in May 2012, some of the carriages are beginning to show their age. A rolling programme of refurbishment is being planned, with an unrestored Mk. 1 set to head off for contract restoration elsewhere, after which carriages from the currently operational fleet will be swapped out in turn to bring them up to the same standard.

"People typically spend more time sitting in a carriage than they do anywhere else on a heritage railway, and some of ours are pretty poor at the moment," Nick pointed out.

"That shows in the reactions when people step on board one that has been refurbished because they openly say how nice those look.

"Some carriages in the fleet have been running since the reopening in 2012, with little major work done to them, and they're now looking faded, with torn upholstery, broken windows and a plethora of doors not working. We must address that, and invest the money into their restoration to keep these assets in good condition, because when they are, they are much more valuable to us. A nicely restored TSO is easier to sell cream teas or serve food on than something that leaves people thinking they should have gone for a curry up the road.

"The aesthetics are one aspect of this, but another is safety, making sure that everything – both above and below the solebar – is in a suitable condition to operate.

"It also ties into another area of the business I'm looking to grow, which is our presence as a filming location. We need to be attractive to that sector as it has high standards,

Steam gala visitor GWR 2-6-2T No. 4144 arrives at North Weald on April 19. Once the overhaul of the EOR's own example of the class is completed in the coming years, sights similar to this will be more common, although it will be turned out in a much different livery.

particularly with the amount of money production companies are willing to pay if what we have is good quality."

Keeping locals on side

One of the big challenges has been local opposition to the railway. Nick is quite aware that its lack of parking facilities does make accessing the EOR tricky for visitors, who will sometimes block up local roads by parking on the streets rather than at Epping and using the connecting bus.

"Creating a tie-in with North Weald Airfield would be far better for parking than relying on Epping Station, and I'm reaching out to them in hopes we can work something out, which partly comes under that ambition of making West Essex an attractive place to visit for a day out," he said. "Could we run a shuttle bus service between all these places, and would it work?

"We also need to improve our accessibility, because at the moment, we're not quite there. We try to be, but we're not very good at it yet. We'll always do our best to accommodate wheelchair users, with priority for parking at North Weald, but that needs improving.

"Access to our heritage fleet is also tricky, and ending up in the guard's van is not a very pretty prospect. The recently-arrived refurbished Mk. 1 carriage, with this area made into a nicer environment for wheelchair users, will prove invaluable, but we must look at how we can make the entire experience open to those with mobility issues as a whole.

"We are a family attraction, and can see upwards of three generations coming here for a day out, which is invaluable. A group of six could be made up of four adults all willing to pay full fare – we don't want them to be put off thinking it'll be too difficult to go to the EOR, even though the kids might love it, so end up heading elsewhere that might be more expensive but have better accessibility arrangements.

"These challenges are baked into heritage railways, and it will take time and investment to achieve. I don't want to industrialise the solution as that would be detrimental to our product, so we need to be empathetic. I've not dared work it out, but we must have a reasonably high average age of volunteers too, so it also needs to work in their benefit."

Despite starting at what is a universally challenging time for the sector, Nick is enjoying the challenge of the role.

"Doing this job has been really fun, as is learning something about this great industry, like making viable business cases out of something so tricky.

"I've had a few conversations lately with the owner, Roger Wright, about expenditure. We are trying to create a more attractive place for people to visit and who are aware of the value or loss, or who value that social media-driven commentary.

"Some of these people have very big audiences; get it wrong and have people leaving think they've been short-changed or that it was a bit boring is a bad outcome.

"Simply cutting costs will result in a race to the bottom. If this industry can't find the funding to continue to invest – to be more attractive, become accessible, cleaner, tidier – then there isn't a future. I'm really wary of creating an environment where we are just constantly cutting costs. It might seem like a short-term imperative, but it won't result in a good long-term outcome. Surely, the right solution is to find ways of driving up revenue by being creative, more imaginative and not repetitive – give people a reason to come back.

"Not every business needs a purpose, but it helps when you are historical to be able to describe why you are relevant. I tell people we are here to enjoy, educate and preserve the history and community of the EOR. That is why we run steam trains; they don't make a lot of money, so that is the reason we do it and is how we will appeal to new people. A recent job opening for a part-time events and marketing assistant was inundated by responses, including some really high-calibre applicants. This says to me that something we're doing is attractive. It's not a job that will make you rich, but we're an attractive place to work, whether you're based locally or from further afield." HR

***Pitchford Hall* starts the climb out of Epping Forest on April 19. The EOR still holds a long-term ambition to directly connect with the Underground with its own station here in future, but that will need to wait until it has established a sustainable footing.**

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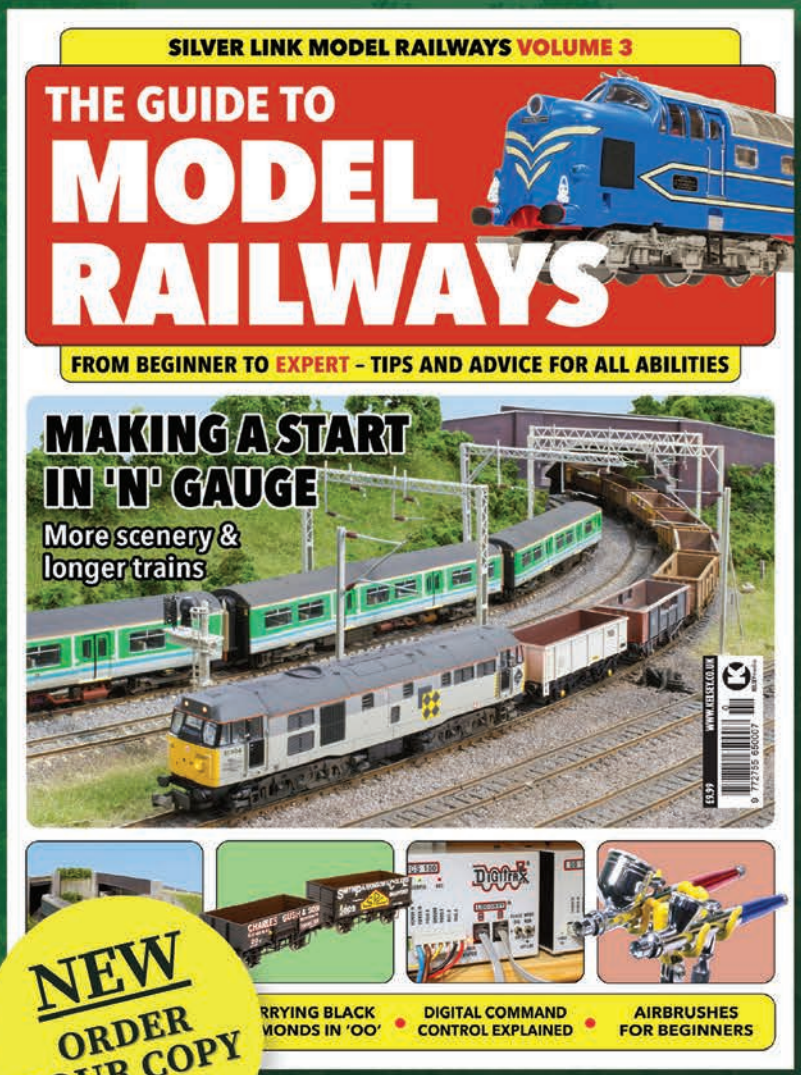

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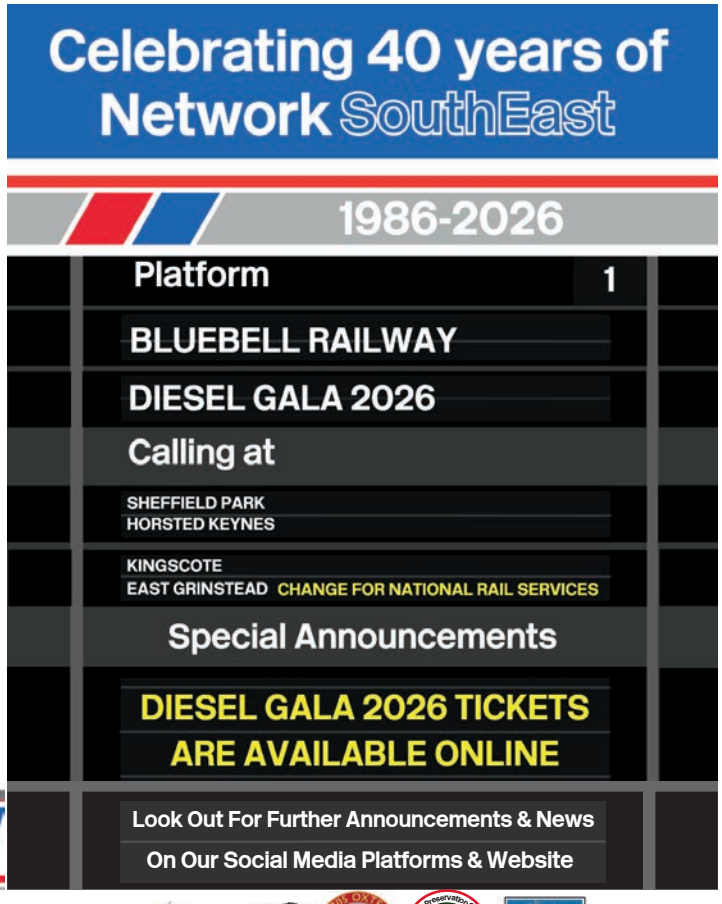

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A SPRING STEAM SPECTACULAR LIKE NO OTHER!

The West Somerset's Railway's May 1-4 steam gala proved a dazzling success, with 11 locomotives of widely varying types including first-time visitors in operation along Britain's longest standard gauge heritage railway, writes **Robin Jones**.

Sheer variety is a defining characteristic of the West Somerset coast, with its plethora of sand, shingle and muddy beaches along the geologically fascinating southern shoreline of the Bristol Channel, which boasts the world's second-highest tidal range after the Bay of Fundy in Newfoundland. Along the coast and inland too lies a string of enticing towns and villages each with their own must-visit distinctive character, and towering beyond them are the lofty heights of the Quantock Hills and the rolling hills of Exmoor.

Linking many of the settlements to the resort of Minehead is the silver thread that is the West Somerset Railway, which, as highlighted in issue 344, is proudly celebrating the 50th anniversary of it being saved by volunteers who had the vision to realise its enormous potential – which was rarely more apparent than at its Spring Steam Spectacular during the May 1-4 bank holiday weekend.

Hailed as the most ambitious gala event to be held on the line for several years, the efforts of the organisers, staff and volunteers who worked over the four days were rewarded with an excellent total of 4700 passengers for the event. Add to that the number of visitors who merely came to see the trains pass by and spend time at the stations, and officials estimated that more than 5000 people made their way to the line for the gala, many from other parts of Britain, to the benefit of the wider local economy.

As with the coast it serves, variety was truly the spice of line, with 11 locomotives of many shapes and sizes in steam, some running passenger trains over the UK's longest standard gauge railway, at 22¾ miles, while others headed shorter shuttles between stations or freight workings, or gave shunting demonstrations. The weather was variable, but not as poor as some forecasts predicted.

The big draw for many was A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* – certainly an appropriate guest in this year of celebrations to mark the LNER Chief Mechanical Engineer's 150th birthday. In its blue livery,

One of the highlights of the Spring Steam Spectacular was a triple-headed formation of GWR Manor 4-6-0s Nos. 7802 *Bradley Manor*, 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* and 7828 *Odney Manor* heading the 5.45pm Bishops Lydeard to Minehead service on May 2. As rain steadily falls, the trio pull into Williton. OWEN HAYWARD

During its first-ever visit to the West Somerset Railway, BR Standard 2-6-4T 4MT No. 80078 arrives at Minehead with a passenger service on May 4. ROBIN JONES

Remembering 1976 again: Bagnall 0-6-0ST *Victor,* running back on the West Somerset Railway after a 30-year absence, heads a service past Kerr Moor on May 3, mirroring the line's debut train half a century before. OWEN HAYWARD

and heading a rake of carmine and cream painted carriages, the A4 presented a visible evocation of the early years of BR, and those carriages quickly filled when the train drew into the station platforms.

No. 60007 is based at the Crewe depot of Locomotive Services Ltd in order to operate main line railtours. However, it has been moved to Bishops Lydeard for the summer season so it can haul the steam legs of main line tours for Saphos Trains (and one for Steam Dreams) from Taunton to the Kingswear terminus of the Dartmouth Steam Railway between now and September 5.

The A4 will also haul another series of WSR services from July 3-5. As reported last issue, it will also attend the Gresley 150 celebration at Wabtec's Doncaster Works on June 20, where it will be in steam outside the building where it was built.

During the A4's visit to the Spring Steam Spectacular, it suffered two faults, firstly on May 1 through tender brake binding, and then on May 4 with a leaking vacuum hose, but despite the ensuing delays, it quickly returned to service after both were fixed.

A diametric contrast to the A4 was Andrew Barclay fireless 0-4-0 No. 1984 of 1930 *Boots No.1*. The surprise star of the WSR's spring event last year, it is currently the only fireless locomotive operational in England.

Built for the Boots pharmaceutical company because of the flammable goods which needed shunting around that firm's factory complex, a conventional steam locomotive was out of the question. The locomotive was superbly restored at Williton by WSR Chief Mechanical Engineer Ryan Pope and his team, it was to be found engine shunting at Minehead throughout the event.

The big star of the show, streamlined A4 Pacific No.60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* passes Nornvis Bridge with a passenger service on May 1. DON BISHOP

With the enticing Doniford Bay in the background, visiting GWR 2-8-0 No. 3850 heads a midday freight on May 3. ADAM ASHFORD

On May 1, GWR 4-6-0 No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* was in charge of the 5pm Bishops Lydeard-Williton goods, seen approaching Churchlands. RUSSELL AYRE

Marathon push for steam

Swindon-designed locomotives were a major feature of the timetable on the GWR branch.

GWR 2884 class 2-8-0 No. 3850, once resident on the WSR, made a welcome return from the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway and was joined in the line-up by a trio of WR 4-6-0s, Nos. 7802 *Bradley Manor*, 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* (both based at the Severn Valley Railway) and 7828 *Odney Manor*, the latter working its first trains after a period of maintenance. WSR mogul No. 9351 was also at work. On the evening of May 2, the three Manors triple-headed a train, recreating a past event when 7820, 7821 and 7828 combined.

The first-time visit of Stewart Robinson's ex-Barry scrapyard BR Standard 4MT 2-6-4T No. 80078, from the Mid-Norfolk Railway, came at the end of the week when its sister, No. 80064, owned by the West Somerset Railway Association, was moved to Cranmore on the East Somerset Railway for a contract overhaul. No. 80064 (minus the boiler, which is being overhauled separately in Bury by Riley and Son) entered the workshop on May 16.

It is intended that the boiler and chassis overhauls will be completed at about the same time, with the intention being that the locomotive will be reassembled at Cranmore, where running in will then take place. Once tested satisfactorily, it will then return to the WSR, where it is hoped to be ready to enter service in time for the summer of 2028.

The ESR's Steve Masters said: "Since 2012, the ESR has overhauled seven locomotives, either to provide motive power for the line or on a contract basis which generates much-needed income for the railway in exchange for the efforts of our hard working, enthusiastic volunteers. Visitors to the ESR will be able to watch the progress of the 4MT's overhaul, as well as having the opportunity to ride behind the loco throughout the running-in period."

The cost of the overhaul of No. 80064 will run well into six figures, and fundraising towards it received a welcome boost on April 26, when WSR volunteers Joe Rogers and Reece Bartle-Coates completed the London Marathon. Reece, running his first marathon, covered the 26 miles and 385 yards in four hours and 30 minutes and Joe in five hours and nine minutes. Association chairman Edward Martin travelled from Somerset to welcome them at the finish and thank them for their great efforts, culminating on a warm day in the capital.

Between them, Joe and Reece have raised some £4000 in direct contributions from JustGiving online pages and money sent to the WSRA office at Bishops Lydeard station.

More donations towards the cost of the overhaul and return to steam will be very welcome and can be made through the WSRA website, or cheques, made payable to West Somerset Railway Association, can be sent to: West Somerset Railway Association (80064), The Railway Station, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3BX.

The appearance of No. 80078 at the Spring Steam Spectacular gave both crews and visitors and tantalising glimpse of what can be expected when its classmate returns in a few years' time.

Impressive 'lost' locomotive

At the gala, Bagnall 0-6-0ST No. 2996 of 1951 *Victor* which, as highlighted in *Heritage Railway* issue 344. hauled the nascent WSR's debut train from Minehead to Blue Anchor on March 28, 1976, made its last appearance before returning to the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway.

It was joined by a late addition to the line-up in the Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' 0-6-0ST No. 1529 *Newstead*, which emerged at the North

***Newstead* with a mixed train at Bishops Lydeard on May 4.** LAURA STANDERWICK

Above:Barclay fireless 0-4-0 No. 1984 of 1930 *Boots No. 1* and NCB Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T No. 1857 of 1952 shunting in the yard at Minehead on May 4. TABITHA PAYNE

The West Somerset Railway's unique 'might-have-been' mogul, one of its many success stories over the past half-century, in gala action on May 3. Built in 1934 as 5101 class 2-6-2T No. 5193 and ending up at Barry scrapyard, it was rebuilt by the line into a 2-6-0, resembling a small-boilered version of the GWR 4300 Class and numbered 9351. GWR Chief Mechanical Engineer George Jackson Churchward had considered a mogul with a No. 2 boiler as part of his standardisation plan, but one was never built. OWEN HAYWARD

Continuing the proud tradition of more than half a century of fundraising for the West Somerset Railway, two of the line's volunteers, Reece Bartle-Coates (left) and Joe Rogers, completed the London Marathon on April 26. WSRA

Hunslet 0-6-0ST No. 1529 *Newstead* approaches Blue Anchor with the morning mixed freight on May 1. OWEN HAYWARD

A4 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* arrives at Watchet with a service from Minehead to Bishops Lydeard on May 4. ROBIN JONES

Norfolk Railway last July having completed an eight-year restoration that had largely been carried out at the Spa Valley Railway, and which has its own unique story.

Withdrawn from Woolley Colliery in 1970, it was bought two years later by traction engineman Malcolm Saul, who undertook at light restoration.

Once complete, it was taken to the grounds of a Carmelite monastery in Ware, where Malcolm tended the gardens, and unloaded onto a short stretch of track laid out especially for the locomotive. A shed was built around it using corrugated sheeting and signal rodding for part of the frames, and it was gradually forgotten about by everyone bar Malcolm, his family, some friends – and the nuns next door.

By the late 1990s, its absence from the public eye resulted in *Newstead* being presumed scrapped by the enthusiast fraternitry.

Malcolm died in 2015, and *Newstead* was bought by Alex Alder, who first took it to the Nene Valley Railway in early 2016 and then Tunbridge Wells West. Since last July, it has visited the Blaenavon Heritage Railway, the Dean Forest Railway, the Swindon & Cricklade Railway and the South Devon Railway as its appeal for the hire circuit flourishes.

Also in action during the event was blue-liveried NCB Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T No. 1857, which made its WSR passenger debut at the Spring Steam Spectacular last year. Built in 1952 for the NCB's Gawber Colliery at Barnsley, it moved coal between the colliery and exchange sidings until 1987 when the colliery closed.

It remained unrestored until the 2010s, when it moved to Williton. Under the guidance of Ryan Pope and owner Martin Atkins, it returned to service in 2022, heading straight to Blaenavon, where it stayed until early 2025. Back at the WSR, it is often employed on driver experience courses but rarely works passenger trains. During the event, it was also used as a steam supply for *Boots No. 1* at Minehead during shunting demonstrations.

The locomotive that began it all in 1976: Bagnall 0-6-0ST *Victor* refilling at the Minehead water tower on May 3. TABITHA PAYNE

Visiting from the Mid-Norfolk Railway, BR Standard 4MT 2-6-4T No.80078 pilots GWR 4-6-0 No 7802 *Bradley Manor* on a passenger service arriving at Watchet from Minehead on May 4. ROBIN JONES

Visiting GWR 2-8-0 No. 3850 passes Leigh Woods on May 2. DON BISHOP

Never a dull moment

There was something different to see and do at almost every station. The Taunton Model Railway Group welcomed visitors to its clubroom at Bishops Lydeard station where the Gauge Museum was also open, as was the museum at Blue Anchor station. The venues are part of the work of the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust, which gave tours of the workshops at Washford on the Saturday and Sunday, where work is continuing on GWR Toplight carriage No. 3639, the latest restoration as part of the Heritage Carriages Project.

The Diesel and Electric Preservation Group's Williton depot was open, giving an advance taste of the line's June 4-6 Summer Diesel Festival, with Class 26 No. 26007 (courtesy of Victor Korzeniewicz), Class 37 No. 37250 (courtesy of Vince Minto) and Class 47 No. 47714 (from the Wensleydale Railway) all making their first-ever visits to the WSR. They will run alongside the home fleet of Class 03 D2133, Class 09 D4107, Class 14 D9526, Class 33 'Cromptons' D6566 and D6575, Class 35 'Hymek' D7017 and the DMU.

Some trains will continue past Bishops Lydeard and run to the southern end of that line at Norton Fitzwarren over a stretch that is rarely used for passenger trains. The Williton depot will again be open to visitors.

The festival has been extended to Sunday June 7, a Mixed Traction Day, with a mixture of steam and diesels hauling passenger trains.

A unique double-header sees streamlined A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* piloted by Hunslet 0-6-0ST No. 1529 *Newstead*, a long-time colliery locomotive, on May 3. ADAM ASHFORD

Now play a part in the next 50 years!

As part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, the railway has launched a £250,000 public fundraising appeal to help secure its future for generations to come.

Having become a cherished part of the community and an important piece of living history since it was saved in 1976, it is calling on supporters, visitors and the wider public to help fund the essential investment needed to keep it operating and preserving heritage for the next half-century.

The WSR owns No. 7828 *Odney Manor* and No. 9351, both of which have their 10-yearly overhauls approaching, and such work can run into many thousands of pounds. The railway is able to hire locomotives from other owners, while the West Somerset Railway Association has targeted 2028 for a return to working life for the two locomotives it owns (Nos. 4561 and 80064, as detailed previously), but it is clearly advantageous for the WSR to also have its own engines back in service as quickly as possible.

Eleven of the 30 BR Mk. 1 carriages on the line are owned by the WSRA, including the 'Quantock Belle' dining car train. The railway, the association and the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust are co-ordinating a programme of maintenance and refurbishment. The trust also has a team of volunteers restoring vintage GWR carriages in workshops at Washford station.

Infrastructure requires constant work. Apart from the 23 miles of running line, plus sidings, there are many bridges and culverts between Norton Fitzwarren and Minehead that must be maintained. More than 60 miles of fencing and gates are needed to deter roaming farm animals and preserve good relations with the railway's neighbours. Trackside vegetation requires year-round care and control to offer the best views of the passing scenery for the passengers and to maintain a healthy habitat.

WSR general manager Kerry Noble said: "Over the last 50 years, the railway has built itself up to become a key tourist attraction in the South West. With the cost of everything going up over the past few years, now is the time that we need further help to secure our heritage for the next 50 years. Any donation, big or small, will be a significant help as we strive to deliver experiences for families who can treasure memories made on our line for a lifetime." HR

➜ Donations to the appeal can be made at **www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk/donations-legacies** or in person at any station.
➜ Additional reporting: Owen Hayward.

Above: Parked at Minehead is Class 35 'Hymek' D7017, rostered for the following big event on the line, the Summer Diesel Festival. ROBIN JONES

Right: LNER A4 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and GWR 4-6-0 No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* pass at Williton with afternoon services on May 2. ADAM ASHFORD

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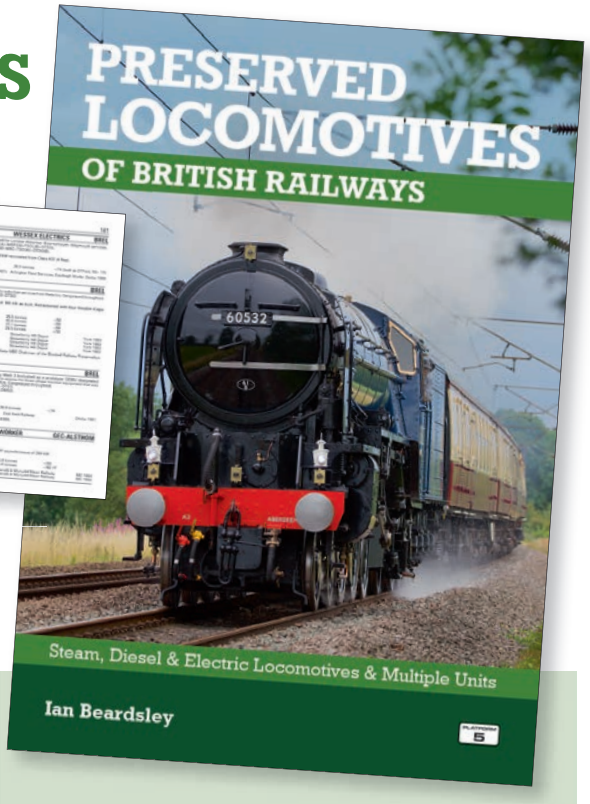

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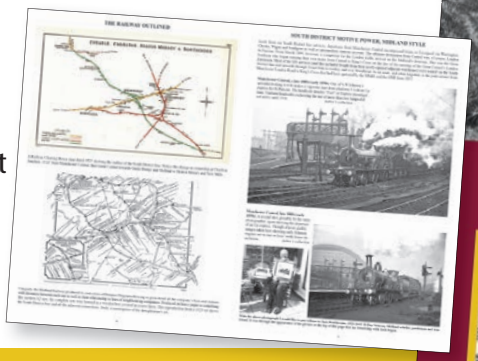

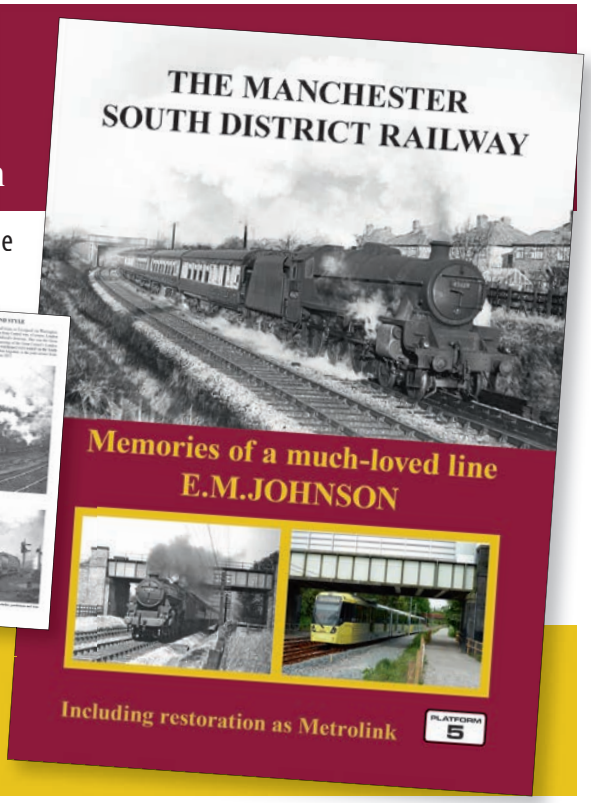

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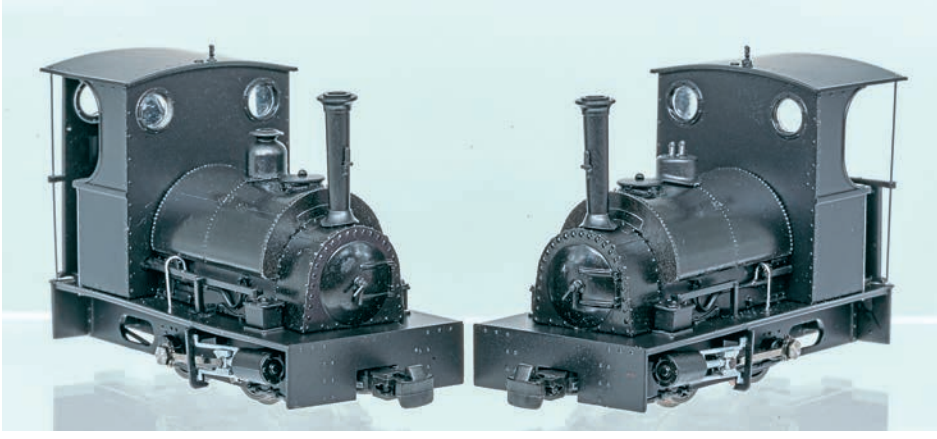
'Cranmore' Pecketts join Rapido's growing 009 range

009 scale modelling has well and truly taken off in recent years thanks to the growing range of ready-to-run models available, with Rapido Trains the latest firm to be offering such products. With its Kerr Stuart 'Sidar' locomotives progressing, the manufacturer has announced another new product – the Peckett & Sons 'Cranmore' class of 0-4-0STs.

Much like their rival locomotive builders, Peckett & Sons of Bristol had an excellent reputation for building effective industrial locomotives. Saddle tanks of various designs and gauges were their most popular and these varied from off-the-shelf established designs to bespoke creations for clients with more specialised needs.

One of these bespoke locomotives was 2ft gauge works No.1030, built in 1904 for the Mendip Granite & Asphalt Co. Its unique features included a saddle tank, an open cab, and 7in x 10in cylinders. Once completed, the engine was painted in works grey livery and named *Cranmore,* but by the time it was delivered, it had received several modifications. These included an enclosed cab and brass name-plates that displayed a new name: *Gamecock.* It was also repainted into Peckett's standard green livery.

Even after its swift rename, the new design would forever be known as the 'Cranmore' Class, with the prototype used in Peckett's advertising at the time. The new model will see nine different variants available, with tooling specifications including a highly detailed diecast metal and injection-moulded plastic construction, smooth-running mechanism powered by a small coreless motor with flywheel, and detail variants including buffer types, cab steps and brake pipes.



The chassis will also be available as a separate product directly from Rapido or through Fourdees Limited only, allowing freelance modellers to use new and existing body kits to create locomotives of their own desires. The RRP starts at £139.95 for complete locomotives or £74.95 for the motorised chassis. The first tooling samples have already been received and are under review.

Ellis Clark 'Pug' makes progress

ELLIS Clark Trains has revealed the first tooling sample for its upcoming OO gauge L&YR 'Pug' locomotives, showcasing the level of detail that modellers can expect. By no means the finished product, there are some adjustments to make, but it clearly shows the attention to detail that has been given as a result of two years of development work behind the scenes.

O gauge versions of these popular locomotives are also being advanced simultaneously, with the larger versions expected to arrive first (delivery is estimated to be in the summer of 2026) and the OO scale versions anticipated to arrive towards the end of the year or in early 2027.

Dapol has announced a new run of its OO scale Hawthorn Leslie 0-4-0ST industrial locomotives, which includes preserved example No. 3135 *Invincible*, based at the Isle of Wight Steam Railway. Built in 1915 to work at Woolwich Arsenal, it arrived on the IOWSR in 1971. Currently part-way through cosmetic restoration and carrying maroon livery, the model will portray it in lined green. Available to order now from all Dapol stockists, the RRP is set at £145, with five other examples also being offered.

"You can never have too many wagons": Rapido continues to expand its range of OO scale pre-Grouping era goods wagons, with the latest announcement being a selection of SER/SECR five-plank open vehicles – including its first ever round-ended models in the scale. More than 2000 wagons were ordered by the SER in the final decade of the 19th century to ensure its goods traffic was not disrupted, with some not arriving until the merger with the LCDR that formed the SECR.

An impressive 25 products are being released, covering a myriad of the different liveries and styles these 10-ton vehicles carried in their working lives, with RRP set at £33.95 per wagon.

Send your model news to staff writer **Owen Hayward** on **owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk**

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OPERATIONAL HERITAGE LINES AND MUSEUMS

SOUTH EAST

Amberley Museum
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Arundel, West Sussex.
Tel: 01798 831370.
Open: Weds-Suns.

Bluebell Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Sheffield Park, East Sussex TN22 2QL.
Tel: 01825 720800.
Running: Tues-Thurs, W/Es.

Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bredgar, Sittingbourne, Kent. Tel: 01622 884254.
Running: Weds + June 7, July 5, 11/12.

Chatham Historic Dockyard
Standard gauge, one mile. Chatham, Kent.
Tel: 01634 820800.
Open: Daily until Sept 6.

East Kent Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Shepherdswell, Kent. Tel: 01304 832042.
Running: Suns.

Eastleigh Lakeside Railway
10¼in & 7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles.
Running: Daily until Sept 27.

Exbury Gardens & Steam Railway
12¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Exbury, Southampton. Tel: 023 8089 1203.
Open: Daily.

Hayling Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Hayling Island, Hants.
Tel: 07902 446340.
Running: Weds, W/Es, sch hols.

Hollycombe Steam in the Country
2ft gauge, 1½ miles. Liphook, Hants.
Tel: 01428 724900.
Open: Suns + June 6, 25, July 4.

Isle of Wight Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Havenstreet, Isle of Wight.
Tel: 01983 882204.
Running: Tues-Thurs, Suns + June 13.

Kent & East Sussex Railway
Standard gauge, 10½ miles. Tenterden, Kent. Tel: 01580 765155.
Running: Tues, Weds, W/Es.

Lavender Line
Standard gauge, one mile.
Isfield, East Sussex.
Tel: 01825 750515.
Running: June 7, 21, 28, July 19.

Mid-Hants Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Alresford, Hants SO24 9JG. Tel: 01962 733810.
Running: Weds, Thurs, W/Es + June 12, 19.

Mizens Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Woking, Surrey.
Tel: 07962 400922.
Running: Suns.

Old Kiln Light Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Farnham, Surrey.
Running: W/Es and bank hols.

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
15in gauge, 13½ miles.
New Romney, Kent. Tel: 01797 362353.
Running: Daily.

Royal Victoria Railway
10¼in gauge, one mile. Netley, Southampton.
Tel: 02380 456246.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, 1¾ miles. Sittingbourne, Kent. Tel: 01795 424899.
Running: Suns, bank hols.

Spa Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Tel: 01892 300141.
Running: W/Es, bank hols.

Volk's Electric Railway
2ft 8½in gauge, one mile. Brighton.
Running: Daily until Sept 30.

SOUTH WEST

Avon Valley Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Bitton, Bristol. Tel: 0117 932 5538.
Running: Suns, bank hols + June 5/6, 27.

Bodmin Railway
Standard gauge, 6½ miles, Bodmin, Cornwall. Tel: 01208 73555.
Running: Tues-Thurs, Suns + June 20, 27.

Bristol Harbour Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Princes Wharf, Bristol.
el: 0117 352 6600.
M Shed Museum open Tues-Suns.
Running: June 6/7, 20/21, July 11/12.

Dartmouth Steam Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Paignton, Devon. Tel: 01803 555872.
Running: Daily.

Devon Railway Centre
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bickleigh, Devon.
Tel: 01884 855671.
Open: Thurs-Suns.

East Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Cranmore, Somerset. Tel: 01749 880417.
Running: Weds, Thurs, W/Es, bank hols.

Gartell Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Yenston, Templecombe, Somerset. Tel: 01963 370752.
Running: Jun 28, July 26.

Helston Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Helston, Cornwall. Tel: 07901 977 597.
Running: Thurs, Suns.

Lappa Valley Railway
7¼in, 10¼ and 15in gauge, one mile.
Newquay, Cornwall. Tel: 01872 510317.
Open: Daily until Oct 4.

Launceston Steam Railway
1ft 11½in gauge, 2 ½ miles. Launceston, Cornwall. Tel: 01566 775665
Running: Suns-Tues + Weds from July 1.

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Woody Bay, North Devon. Tel: 01598 763487.
Running: Tues, Weds, W/Es.

Moors Valley Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Ringwood, Hants.
Tel: 01425 471415.
Running: Daily.

North Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, 1200ft. Shillingstone, Blandford Forum, Dorset. Tel: 01258 860696.
Open: Weds, W/Es.

Plym Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Marsh Mills, Plymouth. Tel: 01752 345078.
Running: Suns + June 13, 20.

Seaton Tramway
2ft 9in gauge, three miles. Harbour Road, Seaton, Devon. Tel: 01297 20375.
Running: Daily.

Somerset & Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Midsomer Norton station, Silver Street, BA3 2EY. Tel: 01761 411221
Open: Suns, bank hols.
Running: June 21, July 4/5, 11.

South Devon Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Buckfastleigh, Devon. Tel: 01364 644370.
Running: Daily.

Swanage Railway
Standard gauge, six miles. Swanage, Dorset.
Tel: 01929 425800.
Running: Daily.

Swindon & Cricklade Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Blunsdon, Wiltshire. Tel: 01793 771615.
Running: W/Es.

West Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, 20 miles.
Minehead, Somerset.
Tel: 01643 704996.
Running: Tues-Thurs, W/Es.

Yeovil Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¾ mile.
Yeovil Junction station, Somerset.
Tel: 01935 410420.
Open: Suns.
Running: Jun 7, 21, July 12, 25/26.

EAST ANGLIA

Bressingham Steam Museum
Narrow and standard gauge, one mile.
Diss, Norfolk. Tel: 01379 686900.
Open: Daily until Nov 1.

Bure Valley Railway
15in gauge, nine miles. Aylsham, Norfolk.
Tel: 01263 733858.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Colne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Castle Hedingham, Essex. Tel: 01787 461174.
Open: W/Es. Running: Suns.

East Anglian Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Wakes Colne, Essex. Tel: 01206 242524.
Open: Weds, W/Es.
Running: June 21, July 5, 22, 26, 29.

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.
Open: W/Es, sch hols.

Mid-Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 11½ miles. Dereham, Norfolk. Tel: 01362 851723.
Running: Weds, Fris-Suns.

Mid-Suffolk Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Brockford, Suffolk. Tel: 01449 766899.
Running: Suns.

Moving the Mail at Quainton Road

This year's Moving the Mail event at Buckinghamshire Railway Centre on Sunday, July 5 aims to be a fun day out for enthusiasts and families alike.

A special family trail will encourage children to find pictures placed around the 25-acre site, and visitors will be invited to report their successful completion of the trail to stewards in the Travelling Post Office carriages, where they can also try sorting letters into the historic sorting frames.

Illustrated talks will be given in the Visitor Centre Cinema Coach, including about the history of the Great Western TPO and the mail bag exchange apparatus. In the TPO carriages, visitors can view a poster display on the history of the postal service and the Great Train Robbery.

All the usual steaming day facilities on site will be available too, including steam train rides, miniature ride-on trains, the museum, model railways, bookshop, café and gift shop.

Left: A Travelling Post Office calls at Quainton Road. BILL SIMPSON/BRC

Pre-order Issue 347 : Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Nene Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 7½ miles. Wansford, Peterborough, Cambs. Tel: 01780 784444.
Running: W/Es.

North Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles.
Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8RA.
Tel: 01263 820800.
Running: Weds-Thurs, W/Es, + June 12. Daily from July 1.

Wells & Walsingham Railway
10¼in gauge, four miles.
Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk.
Tel: 01328 711630.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

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. Museum: Suns.
Running: Suns & bank hols.

Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Chinnor, Oxon. Tel: 07979 055366
Running: Suns + July 4, 18.

Cholsey & Wallingford Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Wallingford, Oxon. Tel: 01491 835067
Running: Jun 7, 13, 19-21, July 4, 17.

Didcot Railway Centre
Standard gauge. Didcot, Oxon.
Tel: 01235 817200.
Open: Weds, W/Es bank hols.
Running: Weds, W/Es, bank hols.

Epping Ongar Railway
Standard gauge, six miles.
Ongar, Essex. Tel: 01277 365200.
Running: W/Es.

Great Whipsnade Railway
2ft 6in gauge. Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable.
Tel: 0344 225 1826.
Running: Daily.

Hampton & Kempton Waterworks Railway
2ft gauge.
Hanworth, Middlesex.
Tel: 01932 212235.
Running: Suns.

Moors-bound diesel-hydraulics

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway's June 11-14 diesel gala will welcome a trio of visiting locomotives to join its home fleet. Class 35 'Hymek' D7017 will appear thanks to the Diesel and Electric Preservation Group at the West Somerset Railway. It will be accompanied by Class 14 D9553 and Class 20 No. 20166, both owned by John Gill and which will travel south from Brechin and the Caledonian Railway.

The NYMR's home fleet includes BR Class 37 Nos. 37264 and 37688 Great Rocks and Class 47 No. 47077 *North Star*, which carries the distinction of being the last locomotive scheduled to haul a cross-country express service on the UK network on August 19, 2002.

The 1903 North Eastern Railway Electric Autocar No. 3170 will be offering a unique glimpse into early electric railway innovation. Brake van rides will be available at Levisham Station, and there will also be shuttle services to Whitby.

For more information and to book tickets to the diesel gala, visit www.nymr.co.uk/dieselgala

Leighton Buzzard Railway
2ft gauge, three miles.
Leighton Buzzard, Beds.
Tel: 01525 373888
Running: Suns.

London Museum of Water & Steam
2ft gauge, 400 yards. Brentford, London.
Tel: 0208 568 4757. **Open: Thurs-Suns.**

MIDLANDS

Abbey Pumping Station
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Corporation Road, Leicester, LE4 5PX. Tel: 0116 299 5111.
Running: June 6, 27/28, July 4.

Amerton Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Stowe-by-Chartley, Staffs. Tel: 01889 271337.
Running: W/Es.

Apedale Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Apedale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs.
Tel: 0845 094 1953.
Running: W/Es.

Barrow Hill Roundhouse
Standard gauge. Barrow Hill, near Chesterfield. Tel: 01246 475554.
Open: W/Es.

Battlefield Line
Standard gauge, five miles.
Shackerstone, Leics.
Tel: 01827 880754.
Running: W/Es.

Cambrian Heritage Railways
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles (Oswestry), ¾ mile (Llynclys).
Oswestry and Llynclys, Shropshire.
Tel: 01691 728131.
Running: Weds, W/Es + July 3.

Chasewater Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Walsall, West Midlands.
Tel: 01543 452623.
Open: Daily. Running: W/Es + July 3.

Churnet Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Cheddleton, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 360522.
Running: Weds, Fris-Suns.

Dean Forest Railway
Standard gauge, 4½ miles.
Norchard, Lydney, Glos.
Tel: 01594 845840.
Running: Weds, W/Es.

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, nine miles.
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 823076.
Running: Thurs (from July 2), Fris-Suns.

Railway museums

Beamish
County Durham. The Living Museum of the North. Open: Daily until Oct 23.
Tel: 0191 370 4000.

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. Open: W/Es & bank hols. Tel: 01270 212130.

Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway
Blythburgh station, off A12 in Blythburgh, Suffolk. Open Tuesdays, with operating days on July 26, and September 13.
Tel: 07379 789665

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.

Southwold Railway Steamworks
Southwold. Tel: 01502 725422.
Open: Jun 7 + Suns in July.

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.

Echills Wood Railway
7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles. Kingsbury Water Park, Sutton Coldfield.
Running: Suns.

Foxfield Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles. Blythe Bridge, Staffs. Tel: 01782 396210.
Running: Suns.

Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
Standard gauge, 15 miles. Toddington, Glos. Tel: 01242 621405.
Running: Tues-Thurs, W/Es + June 12.

Great Central Railway
Standard gauge, eight miles. Loughborough, Leics LE11 1RW. Tel: 01509 632323. www.gcrailway.co.uk
Running: Thurs, W/Es + July 17.

Great Central Railway (Nottingham)
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Ruddington, Notts. Tel: 0115 940 5705.
Open: W/Es.
Running: June 6, 13.

Midland Railway – Butterley
Standard gauge, 3½ miles. Ripley, Derbyshire. Tel: 01773 570140.
Running: W/Es.

National Tramway Museum
Standard gauge, one mile. Crich, Derbyshire. Tel: 01773 854 321
Open: Sats-Thurs, sch hols.

Northampton & Lamport Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Pitsford, Northants. Tel: 01604 820327.
Running: Suns.

Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Hunsbury Hill, Northampton. Tel: 01604 702031.
Running: June 7, 21, July 5, 19.

Peak Rail
Standard gauge, four miles. Matlock, Derbyshire. Tel: 01629 580381.
Running: Weds, W/Es.

Perrygrove Railway
15in gauge. B4228, Coleford, Gloucestershire. Tel: 01594 834991.
Open: Tues, Thurs, W/Es.

Rocks by Rail
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Cottesmore, Rutland. Tel: 07974 171068.
Open: Tues & Thurs.
Running: Jun 14, 28.

Rudyard Lake Railway
10¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Leek, Staffs. Tel: 01538 269948.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Rushden Transport Museum & Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Rushden, Northants. Tel 0300 3023 150.
Running: Aug 2.

Severn Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 16 miles. Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 1QR. Tel: 01562 757900.
Running: Weds, Thurs, W/Es.

Statfold Country Park
Multiple gauges, one mile. Tamworth, Staffs B79 0BU. Tel: 01827 830389.
Open: Fris-Suns, sch hols.

Tanat Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Nantmawr, Shropshire SY10 9HW. Tel: 01691 780042. www.tanatvalleyrailway.co.uk
Open: TBA.

Pick your engine for Ffestiniog's Extreme Steam finale!

Visitors booking tickets in advance for the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's June 19-21 Extreme Steam Extravaganza were able to vote on what locomotives will haul which trains on the final day of the gala.

Celebrating the weird and wonderful, the three-day event will include model railway displays at Minffordd, mixed trains along the WHHR and gravity trains down the FR. The locomotive roster is not just limited to steam, with engineering vehicles and diesel locomotives also putting in appearances during the three days – including some passenger trips.

The final day will see its locomotive allocations decided as the result of the vote by those who booked in advance of May 31.

For full details and timetables, see www.festrail.co.uk/extreme-steam-extravaganza

***Taliesin* sits at Porthmadog on April 13. It could be one of the locomotives working trains on June 21, depending on the result of a public vote to decide the day's roster.** OWEN HAYWARD

Telford Steam Railway
Standard gauge, one mile. Telford, Shropshire.
Running: Suns, bank hols + Jun 6.

Toddington Narrow Gauge Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, Toddington.
Running: Suns.

Valley Railway Adventure
15in gauge, 1¼ miles. A46 north of Evesham, Worcs. Tel: 01386 422282.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

NORTH WEST

Blackpool Heritage Tram Tours
Standard gauge, 11 miles. Blackpool, Lancs. Tel: 01253 209521. www.blackpoolheritage.com
Running: TBA.

Douglas Bay Horse Tramway
3ft gauge, 1 ½ miles. Douglas, Isle of Man. Tel: 01624 697473.
Running: Weds-Suns.

East Lancashire Railway
Standard gauge, 12 miles. Bury, Lancs. Tel: 0333 320 2830.
Running: Weds & Thurs (from June 17), W/Es + July 5.

Eden Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles. Warcop, Cumbria. Tel: 01768 342309.
Running: Suns, bank hols.

Great Laxey Mine Railway
19in gauge, ¼ mile. Laxey, Isle of Man. Tel: 01624 862007/670386.
Running: Sats.

Groudle Glen Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Isle of Man. Tel: 01624 670453. **Running: Suns.**

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.
Running: Daily until Oct 5.

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.

Manx Electric Railway
3ft gauge, 17 miles (MER). Douglas, Isle of Man. Tel: 01624 697473.
Running: Daily until Sept 20.

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway
15in gauge, seven miles. Ravenglass, Cumbria. Tel: 01229 717171.
Running: Daily.

Ribble Steam Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Preston, Lancs. Tel: 01772 728800.
Running: Sats, bank hols.

Snaefell Mountain Railway
3ft gauge, 5½ miles (SMR). Laxey, Isle of Man. Tel: 01624 697473.
Running: Daily until Sept 20.

South Tynedale Railway
2ft gauge, 4¾ miles. Alston, Cumbria. Tel: 01434 338212.
Running: Tues, W/Es.

Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Threlkeld, Cumbria. Tel: 01768 779747.
Open: Tues-Suns, sch hols.

West Lancashire Light Railway
2ft gauge. Hesketh Bank, Lancs. Tel: 01772 815881.
Running: Suns, bank hols.

NORTH EAST

Aln Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Alnwick, Northumberland. Tel: 0300 030 3311.
Running: W/Es, bank hols.

Appleby Frodingham Railway-Scunthorpe
Standard gauge, 15 miles. British Steel Steelworks, Scunthorpe. Tel: 07889 297271.
Running: Sats from Jun 13.

Bowes Railway
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles. Springwell, Tyne & Wear. Tel: 07850 916484.
Open: Tues & Thurs to pre-booked groups only.

Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway
15in gauge, two miles. Cleethorpes, North East Lincolnshire. Tel: 01472 604657.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Derwent Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Murton, near York. Tel: 01904 489966.
Running: Suns, bank hols.

Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Embsay, North Yorks. Tel: 01756 710614.
Running: Tues, Weds W/Es.

Heatherslaw Light Railway
15in gauge, two miles. Ford Forge, Northumberland. Tel: 01890 820244.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Keighley & Worth Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Haworth, West Yorks, BD22 8NJ. Tel: 01535 645214.
Running: Weds, Thurs, W/Es + June 19.

Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway
2ft gauge. Skegness, Lincs. Tel: 07407 500884.
Running: Jun 6, 13, 20, 27, July 8, 15, 18.

Lincolnshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Ludborough, Lincolnshire. Tel: 01507 363881.
Running: June 21, July 5, 11/12, 19.

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

Pre-order Issue 347: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Middleton Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Hunslet, Leeds. Tel: 0845 680 1758.
Running: W/Es, bank hols.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles. Grosmont, North Yorks. Tel: 01751 472508.
Running: Sats-Weds.

Scarborough North Bay Railway
20in gauge, ⅞ mile. Scarborough, North Yorks. Tel: 01723 368791.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Stephenson Steam Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. North Shields. Tel: 0191 277 7135.
Running: Suns, bank hols.

Tanfield Railway
Standard gauge, three miles. Near Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. Tel: 07508 092365.
Running: Suns.

Weardale Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles.
Stanhope, Co. Durham. Tel: 07729 765504.
Running: Jun 8-14, 16, 20/21, 27, July 5, 7.

Wensleydale Railway
Standard gauge, 22 miles. Leeming Bar, North Yorkshire. Tel: 01677 425805.
Running: Tues, Weds, Fris-Suns.

Whistlestop Valley Railway (Kirklees)
15in gauge, four miles. Huddersfield, West Yorks. Tel: 01484 865727.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Yorkshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1,000ft.
Fimber, East Yorkshire. Tel: 01377 338053.
Running: Suns, bank hols.

WALES

Bala Lake Railway
2ft gauge, 4½ miles. Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01678 540666.
Running: Tues-Thurs, W/Es.
Daily from July 1

Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Blaenavon, Torfaen. Tel: 01495 792263.
Running: W/Es, June 10, July 8.

Brecon Mountain Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, five miles.
Pant, Mid-Glamorgan. Tel: 01685 722988.
Running: Sats-Thurs.

Corris Railway
2ft 3in gauge, ¾ mile.
Corris, near Machynlleth.
Tel: 01654 761701.
Running: Jun 6/7, 20/21, July 4/5.

Fairbourne Railway
12¼in gauge, two miles. Fairbourne, Gwynedd. Tel: 01341 250362.
Running: Tues-Thurs, W/Es, sch hols.

Ffestiniog Railway
2ft gauge, 13½ miles. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 516000.
Running: Daily.

Gwili Railway
Standard gauge, four miles. Bronwydd Arms, Carmarthenshire. Tel: 01267 238213.
Running: Weds, Thurs, Suns + June 27.

Llanberis Lake Railway
2ft gauge, three miles. Llanberis, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01286 870549.
Running: Tues-Thurs, Suns, sch hols.

Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Cynheidre, Carmarthenshire.
Tel: 07956 082305.
Running: June 20, July 18.

Llangollen Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Llangollen, Denbighshire. Tel: 01978 860979.
Running: Weds-Suns.

Rhyl Miniature Railway
15in gauge. Rhyl, North Wales.
Tel: 01352 759109.
Running: W/Es, bank hols, sch hols.

Snowdon Mountain Railway
800mm gauge, 4½ miles. Llanberis, Gwynedd. Tel: 01286 870223.
Running: Daily.

Talyllyn Railway
2ft 3in gauge, 7½ miles.
Tywyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01654 710472.
Running: Daily.

Vale of Rheidol Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, 12 miles. Aberystwyth, Ceredigion. Tel: 01970 625819.
Running: Daily.

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 513402.
Running: Weds, Thurs, W/Es.

Welsh Highland Railway
2ft gauge, 26 miles. Caernarfon, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01766 516000.
Running: Daily.

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, eight miles. Llanfair Caereinion, Powys. Tel: 01938 810441.
Running: Tues (from June 23), Weds, Thurs, W/Es + July 10.

SCOTLAND

Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Bo'ness, West Lothian. Tel: 01506 825855.
Running: Tues, Weds (from July 8), W/Es & bank hols.

Caledonian Railway
Standard gauge, four miles.
Brechin, Angus.
Tel: 01356 622992.
Running: Sats (from June 20), Suns.

Doon Valley Railway
Standard gauge. Dunaskin, Ayrshire.
Running: Suns.

Keith & Dufftown Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Dufftown, Banffshire. T
el: 01340 821181.
Running: Fris-Suns.

Lathalmond Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, athalmond, near Dunfermline.
Tel: 07379 914801.
Open: Suns. Running: Suns.

Leadhills & Wanlockhead Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Leadhills, South Lanarkshire. **Running: Suns.**

Royal Deeside Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Banchory, Kincardineshire.
Tel: 01330 844416.
Running: June 7, 14. Suns from July 5.

Strathspey Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Aviemore, Inverness-shire.
Tel: 01479 810725.
Running: Sats-Weds + Thurs from July 2.

IRELAND

Cavan and Leitrim Railway
3ft gauge. Dromod, Co. Leitrim.
Tel: +353 71 963 8599.
Running: Sats-Mons.

Downpatrick & County Down Railway
5ft 3in gauge.
Downpatrick, Co. Down.
Tel: 028 4461 5779.
Running: July 4/5, 18, 25.

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland
5ft 3in gauge. Whitehead, Co. Antrim.
Tel: +44 28 9358 6200.
Museum open: Thurs-Sats.
Running: July 4, 18.

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.

JUNE

- 3-12 *Flying Scotsman* experiences, East Lancashire Railway
- 4-6 Summer Diesel Festival, West Somerset Railway
- 5 Father's Day, Embsay & Bolton Abbey Railway
- 5/6 Real Ale & Cider Festival, Kent & East Sussex Railway
- 5/6 Rail Ale Beer Festival, Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways
- 6 Llangollen Garden Railway Festival, Llangollen Railway
- 6/7 Young Engineers with Chris Vine, Didcot Railway Centre
- 7 Dino Day, Buckinghamshire Railway Centre
- 7 Mixed Traction day, West Somerset Railway
- 11-14 Diesel Gala, North Yorkshire Moors Railway
- 12-14 June Real Ale Festival, Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
- 12-14 Rails & Ales Mixed Traction Gala, North Norfolk Railway
- 13 Park Animals, Apedale Valley Light Railway
- 13 Tanker train day, Dean Forest Railway
- 13/14 Beer Festival & Classic Car Rally, Aln Valley Railway
- 13/14 Model Railway weekend, Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
- 13/14 Wartime & Rationing weekend, Epping Ongar Railway
- 13/14 Retro Wheels & Rail, Mid-Hants Railway
- 13/14 Grand Summer Steam Gala, Moors Valley Railway
- 13/14 Dinosaur weekend, Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
- 14 Father's Day Driver for a Fiver, Rocks by Rail
- 18-21 Diesel Gala, Keighley & Worth Valley Railway
- 19-21 Extreme Steam Extravaganza, Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways
- 19-21 Legends of Industry Gala, Tanfield Railway
- 20/21 End of Steam on the Alnwick Branch 60th Anniversary, Aln Valley Railway
- 20 Bluey visits, Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
- 21 Ridgeway Run, Buckinghamshire Railway Centre
- 21 Dino Day, Hopetown Darlington
- 21 Derbyshire Dales Bus and Train Festival, Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
- 21 Father's Day Beer Festival, Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
- 26-28 Roads to Rail Steam Rally, Swanage Railway
- 27 Motor Rail Mania, Apedale Valley Light Railway
- 27/28 Model Railway weekend, Bluebell Railway
- 27/28 Summer Steam Gala, Bodmin Railway
- 27/28 Thomas Branch Line weekend, Nene Valley Railway
- 27/28 1940s weekend, Severn Valley Railway
- 28 Class 20 running day, Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
- 28 Railbus & Vintage Bus day, Mid-Suffolk Light Railway
- 28 Dungeness Vintage Lorry Rally, Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway

JULY

- 2-5 Summer Diesel Gala, East Lancashire Railway
- 3-5 Beer Festival, Talyllyn Railway
- 4/5 Class 11 weekend, Aln Valley Railway
- 4/5 The 1940s Experience, Isle of Wight Steam Railway
- 4/5 Classic Transport weekend, Llangollen Railway
- 4/5 1940s Weekend, Peak Rail
- 4/5 1940s weekend, Severn Valley Railway
- 5 Moving the Mail, Buckinghamshire Railway Centre

Organising a gala or other big event? Email the details to Owen Hayward at owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk

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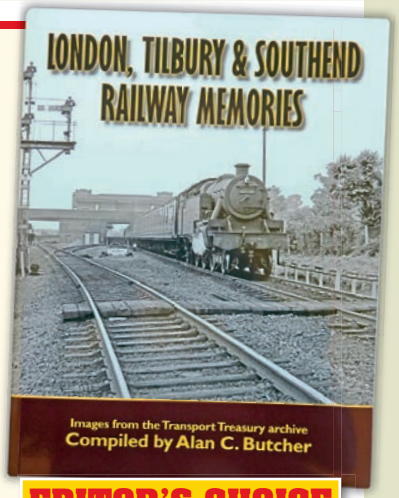
London, Tilbury & Southend Railway Memories



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Compiled by Alan C Butcher (softback, Transport Treasury Publishing, 112pp, £14.95 plus £3 p&p, cheques payable to Transport Treasury Publishing and sent to 16 Highworth Close, High Wycombe, HP13 7PJ, ISBN 978-1-913251-98-7).

THERE are the lines that had, and doubtless still have, an allure which railway enthusiasts find irresistible, dominated by the routes from the capital to Scotland courtesy of either the East Coast Main Line or its West Coast equivalent, or to the West Country, **writes Geoff Courtney**. There are other lines that also appeal, and in this regard the Settle-Carlisle inevitably springs to mind.

However, there are many that went, and continue, to go about their business in a totally pragmatic way with no fuss, no bother, no attention, and very few linesiders with either notebooks or cameras.

One such example is the subject of this book, the London Tilbury & Southend Railway, which started life in 1854 run by a firm of contractors and grew over the years within the Midland Railway, LMS and BR Eastern Region stables, and today it carries thousands of commuters to and from London each day.

Few linesiders there may have been, but I was one in the late 1950s due to the route passing through Barking not far from my then home, and I have within my notes two logs I made there on consecutive days in December 1959 which emphasise the domination of ex-LMS Class 4P and BR Standard class 4MT 2-6-4T motive power, with the occasional Class 20 (D80xx), Class 21 (D61xx) and 31 (D55xx) diesels thrown in to add what was in truth a welcome bit of variety.

In a volume that compiler Alan Butcher says captures the atmosphere of the early post-Second World War era "when steam still ruled the rails," there are enough images of engine classes other than the typical LTSR 2-6-4T fayre to retain the reader's attention, and in this context the chapters on the carriage fleet and locomotives used by such associated industrial systems as Ford and the Port of London Authority are well-researched bonuses.

A NARROW SUBJECT WITH WIDE APPEAL

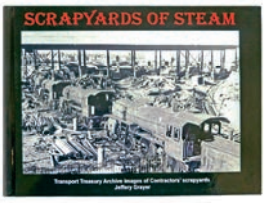
Scrapyards of Steam

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 978-1-913893-80-4).

AS a steam trainspotter from the mid-1950s into the early 1960s, I pursued my hobby with an enthusiasm and dedication that should have been spent on my studies, **writes Geoff Courtney**. At its core were obviously numbers, numbers, and even more numbers, aided and abetted by the wonderful Ian Allan Combined Volume ABCs (a hefty 10s 6d) and a Bradshaw's Guide.

There was little sophistication or scholarly input involved, but one emotion that even now I distinctly recall is how I felt during regular shed 'bunking' about the queues of locomotives in the scrap line, looking sad, forlorn and unwanted, all of which they of course were. Mighty beasts waiting to be slain in the cause of progress, and I even wrote essays on the subject, much to some of my mates' amusement and my form teacher's amazement.

I thus approached this railway newcomer to the bookshelves with a little bit of trepidation in fear that images of dismantled steam locomotives lying around in unphotogenic scrapyards up and down the country was hardly the stuff of photographic dreams. But then I realised the end of these engines' days was part of the country's railway evolutionary cycle, so why not commemorate steam in this way? And yes, it works.



Jeffery Grayer, who features scrapyards large and small from South Wales, through the Midlands, South Yorkshire and North East, to Scotland, says there was something poignantly melancholic about stripping once proud locomotives down to their bare essentials.

The yards, he writes, were great levellers, and such Pacifics as A3s and A4s, Duchesses, Merchant Navies and Britannias, down to the humblest tanks, were despatched with equal indifference.

Indifference is not an emotion a dedicated railway enthusiast of my age and era can feel on going through the publication's pages, but sadness at seeing the stark reality of dismembered steam engines is tempered by gratitude that there are survivors on heritage lines around the country that continue to give us pleasure.

STEAM BOOK THAT SCRAPS PRECONCEPTIONS

Heritage Railway Guide: The Kent & East Sussex Railway

By Richard Marks (softback, Pen & Sword, 160pp, £16.99, ISBN 978-1-036123-40-6)

NOT another book on the Kent & East Sussex Railway, you might ask. Well, this bumper guide by Richard Marks takes you on a different journey, incorporating many of the books written into one, starting with 'how to get there.' The next chapter moves to a brief history of the area, before we travel to all five of its stations, with some wonderful photographs of each, including its infrastructure (such as crossings and signalboxes), locomotives and rolling stock, as well as views from the train en route. The Robertsbridge extension is given a few pages, with photographs covering it right up to today.

The chapter on the KESR's locomotive fleet will have enthusiasts sitting up as it runs through them all.

The penultimate chapter is called Special Events & Experiences, which the K&ESR has had to become an expert in, drawing visitors to shows that there is an event for everybody.

The final chapter caters for those staying in the area and wishing to visit places nearby or further afield. This is no basic guide; it is the sort of book you will pick up and not want to put it down, and is a must for any light railway book collector.

Enthusiasts of Colonel Stephens will be pleased to see that the museum is highlighted, while his head office at Tonbridge gets a mention. This railway was certainly one of his personal favourites, and the work to restore it to its current level is something that must be applauded.

PREMIER GUIDE TO PREMIER LIGHT RAILWAY

East German Steam

By Chris Dyke (softback, Key Publishing, £16.99, 96pp, ISBN 978-1-836320-70-8.)

ENTHUSIASTS who like European railways will really enjoy this book, which covers eight narrow gauge lines in the area that was East Germany: half of these are around Dresden, and amazingly, most of them escaped serious damage during the Second World War.

Covering lines built in the late 19th and early 20th century, the oldest being Weisseritztal Railway (1883) to Mecklenburg Baderbahn Railway (1925), most are 750mm gauge, with the Mecklenburg being 900mm.

Many of these began as industrial railways, moving to mixed traffic, and when freight moved to road transport, they became passenger railways. All operate in picturesque areas and now have considerable tourist traffic, run by independent companies with state aid.

The 157 colour images were taken between 1992 and 2006, all of steam-hauled trains, and they capture the superb scenery of these eight lines, with the Harz Railways being the jewel. The chapters covering each line have details of their histories and routes – some even with maps.

Those who purchase this book may well be encouraged to book their own German railway break.

TREASURES OF EAST GERMANY

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Wedding bells ring after Shipley Glen Tramway trip

By Robin Jones

FOR funicular railway fan Stephanie Alder, there was only one clear choice when it came to getting to her wedding with her bridesmaids on time – take the Shipley Glen Tramway!

Stephanie, 41, from Bradford, tied the knot with fellow enthusiast David Alder 39, after the bridal party stayed at Bracken Hall guest house and travelled into Saltaire on the 131-years-old cable-hauled volunteer-run tramway for the wedding in Victoria Hall on May 9.

A tramway statement said: "Steph and Dave have very fond memories of the tram as they had their second date on Shipley Glen.

"Dave lives in Saltaire, and they decided to involve the community in which they live, including the tramway, which was decorated for the occasion, and glasses of Prosecco helped them celebrate their wedding."

The couple had also visited funiculars in the West Country, Canada, and Portugal.

Stephanie told the BBC: "It sprung to mind about how lovely that would be for me and my bridal party to be able to have a little walk down to the tram, have a go on the tram, and then walk up to Victoria Hall.

"It was also reflective of mine and my friends' friendship because we like tramways and funiculars and walking, so it was a full circle moment for us. They're just really lovely modes of transport, to be able to get from A to B, but also they're always near stunning scenery."

Praising the tramway team on the big day, she said: "They were just so lovely. They were so excited straight away, and they put on a really special thing."

A tramway spokesperson said: "We can decorate the tram in your wedding colours.

"We'll have a glass of fizz on hand for you."

Stephanie Alder and her bridesmaids board the Shipley Glen Tramway on May 9. SGT

Downsizing on a Class 225

By Robin Jones

AN LNER East Coast Main Line driver with than 40 years' experience has tried a new life in the slow lane.

Nigel Turner, who joined the main line as a driver's assistant in 1983, moved in March 2002 to drive high-speed passenger trains on the ECML Class 43 HSTs, Azumas and Class 91 InterCity 225s.

LNER marked 225 Day for the first time on May 22, 2025. To celebrate the occasion, this year Nigel visited the mile-long 7¼in gauge Manor Park Miniature Railway in Glossop and drove its Class 91, with a top speed of just 6mph – 119mph slower than what he is used to.

Nigel said: "I think it is easier to drive a full-sized Class 91! While there are similarities, such as maintaining awareness of your surroundings, you feel the gradients and the bends a lot more than you do on a high-speed train, and it is a bit trickier to control. The park is lovely to drive through, but I was constantly on alert, watching out for dogs chasing after their ball, children running around, and even the squirrels that wanted to try and say 'hello!' – not necessarily things you regularly see on the East Coast Main Line."

Nigel's love for railways started when he was four years old, when his father took him to Liverpool Street station. "There was a Class 37 in the station, and the driver invited me into the cab. From that, all I wanted to do was become a train driver.

"I did a bit of miniature train driving back in day when I was about 20 years old at a local park in South London. It was a bit like going back to my youth again, and I enjoyed every moment."

Nigel now supports the LNER driver training programme. However, on this occasion, it was his turn to be in the classroom, with the Glossop railway's general manager, Caleb Lovegrove, showing him the ropes.

Caleb said: "It was great to be able to have a real-life train driver in the hot-seat of our miniature Class 91. Nigel's experience stood him in good stead, but there was still lots for him to learn to be able to drive round the Manor Park railway without issue, but he did a great job. He even picked some passengers up along the way, giving them a smooth and enjoyable ride around the park."

LNER driver Nigel Turner behind the controls of a Class 225, watched by Caleb Lovegrove, of Manor Park Miniature Railway. LNER

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