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ISSUE 351

HERITAGE RAILWAY

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King draws the crowds to Nene Valley

... as date is set for main line comeback

AUTUMN GALA SEASON IN PICTURES

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- New Churnet Valley charity acquires Austerity and pannier for hire fleet plans
- Severn Valley's Kidderminster canopy construction to commence imminently
- Bala Lake extension awarded £850,000 thanks to Welsh Government grant



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CALEDONIAN SLEEPER



A buzzard takes flight as LMS 'Black Five' No. 45110 pilots new-build GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange,* passing Laverton on their way to Broadway during the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway's popular autumn spectacular Mixed Traction Extravaganza Gala on October 11: see also News, page 10. JOHN TITLOW

Heritage heroes preserving the pioneers in novel ways

AT the apex of the achievements of the heritage sector sit artefacts that either mark milestones in the development of transport technology or are recreations of them (such as new-build locomotives that return extinct classes to the public gaze as pictured above).

Railworld Wildlife Haven, a unique 'twin' attraction to the Nene Valley Railway at Peterborough, has for more than four decades worked wonders in saving redundant classic structures big and small from the national network, reusing them in a blend of recreational leisure and educational purposes alongside the East Coast Main Line. A contender for pride of place at Railworld must surely be the landmark that is the surviving section of Britain's only hovertrain, RTV (Research Test Vehicle) 31.

Trialled on a test track in Earith in Cambridgeshire in the early 1970s, its designers aimed to produce a revolutionary form of fast landmark travel that would surpass anything that the rail network of the day, let along motorway transport, could offer. However, competing projects saw rail win hands down for many reasons, firstly with the Advanced Passenger Train and then that invention's more practical rival, the High Speed Train.

Thankfully, the 'might have been' hovertrain option will never be forgotten thanks to the stalwart Railworld volunteers. Despite its supporting concrete beam having cracked and been condemned, the body of the hovertrain has just been dismantled and lifted to safety, to be restored as a showpiece in which it may well be possible to watch vintage films of it in action half a century ago, as reported in News, page 20.

The hovertrain could so easily have been lost, but yet again, the volunteer and enthusiast community has demonstrated its willingness and ability to save iconic pieces of the past against the odds. Well done to all!

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YOU are likely to have seen recent news reports regarding the planned closure of a number of TG Jones shops, previously known as WH Smith, in local high streets.

While we do not yet know which stores are closing, it is now understood it will be a higher number than first thought, and it still remains unclear if your local store is affected.

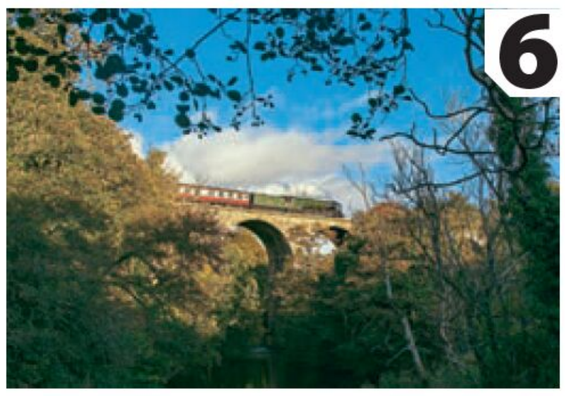
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After taking over from diesel traction at Taunton, BR standard Class 8 No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* crosses Tiddy Viaduct in Cornwall at the start of a four-day Steam Dreams excursion to the region. DON BISHOP



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Photographers line the field to glimpse of No. 6024 as it departs Wansford on October 10, its first day of public services. HAYDEN SHEPPARD



***King Edward I* passes Wansford-based Aveling & Porter No. 9449 *The Blue Circle* as it moves off shed on October 11. The two locomotives were built for very different purposes: the former to haul expresses by the GWR, while the latter shunted at the Snodland plant of what later became Blue Circle Cement works.** OWEN HAYWARD

A royal-y good weekend for Nene Valley as King visit packs out trains

By Owen Hayward

WITH an established reputation for bagging high-profile main line locomotives, the Nene Valley Railway's latest coup brought a positive out of misfortune as GWR 4-6-0 No. 6024 *King Edward I* made its post-overhaul debut on the Cambridgeshire heritage line, filling trains in the process.

Despite having emerged from Locomotive Services Limited's Crewe workshops in May, the summer steam ban meant that the Swindon-built express locomotive was unable to undertake much testing and mileage accumulation, let alone haul a railtour, so the services it worked on the NVR on October 10/11 were the first opportunities to enjoy a trip behind it since overhaul. Accordingly, crowds flocked to the NVR's stations and along the lineside of the 7½-mile route, with trains full to bursting each day.

Built in 1930, No. 6024 was allocated to Plymouth Laira depot for most of its working life, with just a transfer to Old Oak Common in March 1959 and finally Cardiff Canton in October 1961, from where it was withdrawn the following June.

Initially earmarked to be sent to Briton Ferry scrapyard at Neath, No. 6024 and classmate No. 6023 *King Edward II* instead went to the Woodham Brothers' Barry scrapyard after it was found the class was unable to travel further west of Cardiff.

This may have been a vital factor in the locomotive being saved, as from there it was bought in 1974 by the King Preservation Society.

The group initially had its eyes on No. 6023, but following a derailment in the scrapyard, its rear driving axle had been cut in two, so it was deemed to be beyond economical repair.

Initially moved to Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton Road, No. 6024 was returned to steam there in 1989, before then moving to Tyseley for main line testing. On April 15, 1990, it hauled its first passenger train since being withdrawn and has remained a regular main line performer since.

Troubled overhaul

When an internal legal dispute rendered the owning group deficient in cash funds in 2010, the now-renamed 6024 Society sold the locomotive to the Royal Scot Locomotive & General Trust, and an overhaul was undertaken by volunteers at Minehead on the West Somerset Railway, with contract assistance where required.

No. 6024 seemed to be near completion in August 2022, when it appeared in steam in the station yard and moved under its own power the following month. In February 2023, it moved to Crewe for what was expected to be finishing off; however, further necessary work was identified, and the boiler was removed from the frames.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 345, on May 6, No. 6024 caught enthusiasts by surprise when it made an unexpected appearance on a test run between Crewe and Chester, albeit it in an unfinished state, with a subsequent outing over the same route 20 days later.

On June 4, the NVR announced it had booked the locomotive for its first heritage line appearance, revealing that the King would pull trains between Wansford, Yarwell and Peterborough for one weekend only.

Later that month, LSL shared photographs online of No. 6024 in the paintshop, showing the locomotive in grey with what appeared to be finished lining on some parts such as the cab. Many speculated that the locomotive would therefore emerge in works photographic grey, a livery seldom represented and which would have been a preservation first for the class. However, it was later revealed that the lining was a test and the grey was undercoat, and the locomotive emerged on August 6 wearing the GWR's 1920s era livery with Great Western on the tender.

Despite some claiming that BR is the only livery correct for No. 6024 in its current condition, its latest overhaul has seen it receive modifications including slimmer cylinders and bufferbeams to reduce its loading gauge, thus improving its route availability, meaning no livery would have been wholly accurate.

The Great Western finish also offers a comparison to 4-6-0 No. 5029 *Nunney Castle*, which carries the 1940s-era livery with GW and company crest on the tender.

King Edward I arrived on the NVR by rail and without diesel assistance on October 7. On both of its public running days, it hauled four round trips of the line, starting and finishing each day at Wansford.

Additionally, on the Saturday evening it hauled 'The Jolly Fisherman,' the railway's on-board fish and chips dining service.

Between trains, Aveling & Porter 2-2-0WT No. 9449 *The Blue Circle* could be found moving about Wansford station, entertaining visitors and offering a chance to drive it for a short distance within the locomotive yard.

Debut date set

No. 6024 returned to Crewe on October 13 in readiness for its first main line tour scheduled for November 11, when it will pull 'The Cumbrian Mountaineer.'

Following similar tours run in the spring with A2 No. 60532 *Blue Peter*, A4 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and Standard Class 7 No. 70000 *Britannia* to compare locomotive performances, the King will set out from Crewe for a run to Carlisle and back, taking in the High Pennines, Cumbrian Mountains and even tackling the gradients of Grayrigg to reach Shap Summit.

After a two-hour break for passengers to explore the city, the return from Carlisle will be over the Settle to Carlisle route, including taking in the Ribblehead Viaduct, with the outing steam-hauled throughout.

Standard tickets had already sold out as this issue went to press, but seats remained available in First; there is no dining option on this working, but an on-board buffet will serve drinks and snacks.

➜ **For details, see saphostrains.com**



Right: The King catches the afternoon sunshine as it puts down the power and romps up Castor Straight towards Overton on October 11. OWEN HAYWARD

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Welsh Government awards £850k grant for Bala Lake town extension

By Robin Jones

THE Bala Lake Railway has been granted £850,000 through the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme towards the first phase of its extension into the town centre.

The scheme is also a key part of the vision and objectives set out in the Bala Placemaking Plan. By bringing the 2ft gauge line from its terminus of more than 50 years at Pen Y Bont directly into the town centre to a new station site, the extension will strengthen the connection between the visitor attraction, the high street, and local businesses, encouraging visitors to spend more time in the town and the surrounding area, supporting existing businesses, and helping to create employment opportunities within the local economy.

Once the project is completed in its entirety, the aim is to help establish Bala as a destination, rather than a town that visitors pass through on their way elsewhere. Visitors will be able to leave their cars behind and travel by train through the landscape of Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri.

Bala Lake Railway Trust chairman Julian Birley said: "It has taken 12 years of hard work and perseverance to reach this point. Thanks to the generosity of people locally and from around the world, we have raised £1.8 million to date to secure all the necessary approvals and permission, purchase land and complete the detailed design work.

Immediate work

"The new funding will enable us to make significant progress with the work on the ground, and we can begin the work immediately. We are extremely grateful to Cyngor Gwynedd and the Welsh Government for their support for this project.

"Once completed, the railway will operate as a sustainable attraction that residents and visitors can enjoy for generations to come."

Siân Gwenllian, the Welsh Government's cabinet minister for local government, housing and planning, said: "I am delighted that the Welsh Government is supporting this exciting first phase of the Bala Lake Railway project through our Town Transformation Programme.

"Extending the railway into the heart of the town will create a vital link between this much-loved heritage attraction and Bala's High Street, bringing more visitors into the town centre and giving a welcome boost to local businesses.

"It's fantastic to see such strong backing for this scheme from residents, businesses and local councils, and I look forward to seeing this important project progress."

Coun R Medwyn Hughes, Cyngor Gwynedd cabinet member for economy and community, added: "Extending the railway into the town centre will enhance the company's existing facilities while contributing to the town's economic vibrancy."



***Taffy* and *Chaloner* working together in 2025.** MARK LEWIS/LBR

'Coffee Pot' festival brewing at Leighton Buzzard

THE Leighton Buzzard Railway has announced plans for a second 'Coffee Pot' locomotive festival on May 15/16.

The extravaganza of up to six vertical-boiler locomotives, often referred to as 'Coffee Pots,' follows up the line's first such event in 2011.

Taking centre stage while celebrating its 150th birthday will be the Fisher family's 1877-vintage ex-Pen-yr-Orsedd slate quarry De Winton 0-4-0VBT *Chaloner,* which became the first locomotive to steam at the LBR since the 1920s and remains an icon of the line.

Visiting locomotives booked so far are 0-4-0VBT *Taffy,* from Alan Keef Ltd, and Bressingham-based 2015-built 0-4-0VBT *Fernilee*. Talks are in progress concerning more guest locomotives.

On May 14, the day before the festival, it is intended hold a photographic day offering pre-booked participants the opportunity to photograph trains hauled by 'Coffee Pots' at Page's Park and on the demonstration lines at Stonehenge Works without the general public in attendance.

There will be model engineering-sized 'Coffee Pots' in action on the 5in/7.25in gauge miniature railway at Stonehenge Works too, and it is hoped to have a 16mm gauge line for models, with the possibility of smaller scales also being represented.

Owners of 'Coffee Pots' of all sizes interested in participating are invited to email CoffePot@LBNGRS.org.uk

Southern lines schedule end of Southern Steam events

HERITAGE lines in the south of England are gearing up to host events marking the 60th anniversary of the withdrawal of steam operations from the Southern Region on July 7, 1967.

The Bluebell Railway is currently starting proceedings with a gala on June 19/20, which promises to "bring the 1960s to life," with vintage vehicles and exhibits setting the scene alongside train services, and it has appealed for anyone with suitable displays who wishes to take part to get in touch.

The Swanage Railway's July 9-11 event will start as steam-only, before the roster gradually shifts to reflect that transitional era when diesels began to appear, before concluding with that form of traction completely taking over the operation on trains between the seaside resort station and Norden station.

The Mid-Hants Railway will hold a special weekend on September 11/12. On the Saturday, a special timetable will be in use, with both a Real Ale Train and Watercress Belle fine dining service included. The next day will see a three-train service in operation with a Royal Wessex fine dining service included on board for customers to enjoy partaking in a Sunday lunch.

Next year is also the MHR's own golden jubilee, with plans being made to celebrate the anniversary of its opening on April 30, 1977.

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Left: WR pannier No. 6435 has now arrived in Staffordshire, where it will be overhauled and made available for hire. It currently carries the number of South Devon Railway-based sister No. 6412, which starred in the 1977 'Flockton Flyer' TV series. IAN RALPHS/CVR



Right: On August 3, *Wimblebury* departs Consall with a train to Leek. FRANK RICHARDS/CVR

Fresh structure for Churnet Valley as charity acquires two new locomotives

By Owen Hayward

THE Churnet Valley Railway has taken a substantial step towards a new charitable group structure following three years of detailed work between Churnet Valley Railway (1992) plc and its longstanding supporting charity previously known as the North Staffordshire Railway Company (1978) Limited, officially renamed Churnet Valley Railway (NSRC) Heritage Trust Limited.

The intended structure will see the charity head of a group of companies, bringing railway operations, heritage preservation and income-generating activities together within a coordinated organisation. Supported by unanimous votes from both plc shareholders and charity members and with specialist legal and tax advice, the changes aim to strengthen the railway's financial resilience, support investment in its collections and infrastructure, and provide a foundation for development over the next 20 years.

Clearance of the proposed restructuring and share exchange came from HM Revenue & Customs on July 3, and the charity's members approved the revised articles at its annual general meeting on August 22.

While there will be no noticeable changes for passengers, behind the scenes, it gives the CVR the opportunity to receive Gift Aid on donations and qualifying entrance arrangements. Bringing the railway's activities and assets into a coordinated structure is also intended to strengthen its ability to pursue grant funding, including opportunities through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and other bodies, subject to their individual requirements.

The railway already benefits from substantial land and asset holdings, providing a firm foundation for future preservation and development, enabling the organisation to plan investment throughout the railway as a whole.

Fleet for hire

One of the new opportunities the railway is seizing is building a locomotive hire business. Thanks to sizeable legacies left to it in the past 12 months, the charity has recently acquired Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 3839 *Wimblebury* from its own private owner.

It has been on loan to the railway since the spring, as well as GWR 0-6-0PT No. 6435, from West Somerset Railway chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt; the pannier is currently out of service and awaiting overhaul. The investment in these "are principally investments in locomotives intended for hire to other heritage railways," said a spokesman.

"*Wimblebury* and No. 6435 could occasionally appear on one-off specials or other suitable duties, with diesel assistance where necessary. Their primary purpose, however, is to form part of a growing hire fleet generating income from work elsewhere. *Wimblebury* is already demonstrating that potential through a short-term hire to the Great Central Railway (Nottingham). It is expected to return to Staffordshire at the end of October, ready to provide standby cover for the railway's Polar Express services, and will be available for further hire during 2027.

"No. 6435 has arrived at Cheddleton, where stripping and assessment have begun ahead of a comprehensive overhaul. Once restored, it is intended to join the developing hire fleet.

"The railway's ability to undertake heavier repairs in-house is an important part of the business model. Provision must be made from hire income for maintenance and future overhauls, but with those costs properly accounted for, the fleet offers an additional source of cash to support the wider organisation.

"Over time, the intention is to develop a small, carefully managed steam and diesel hire fleet overseen by the charity.

Carriage demand

"A number of Mk. 2 vehicles see relatively little use during the operating season, creating opportunities to put them to productive use on other railways. A selection of coaches will be available for hire during 2027, with further vehicles intended to join the hire fleet over time."

The railway remains committed to several other projects, including the development of a visitor centre within the triangle at Leek Brook and a new station building at the Leek terminus. Options for a sustainable railway are also being looked at, with electricity use in 2024 having been reduced by 26% compared to that of 2019.

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West Somerset in mourning for its chairman

THE West Somerset Railway has been in mourning following the death of its plc chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt on October 11.

Jonathan, a locomotive owner who first took the reins in September 2018, died aged 42 in a London hospital while being treated for an undisclosed illness. In a statement, WSR interim chief executive officer Clive Hetherington said that Jonathan, known to many as JJP, "made an enormous contribution to the WSR."

"His dedication, commitment and work over many years have left a lasting mark on the railway and the many people who have worked alongside him," he said. "He will be greatly missed by colleagues, friends and all those who knew him and valued his contribution to the WSR. Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with John's family at this very sad time."

In addition to his many business interests over the years, Jonathan also had a large collection of vintage commercial vehicles.

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Tornado blows in for last-minute Bo'ness appearance

By Owen Hayward





Above: No. 60163 crosses the Avon Viaduct on October 11 with a train to Bo'ness. CHRISTOPHER PATON

Left: Bringing the curtain down on the gala, Nos. 15189, 5710 and 60163 climb away from Manuel in triple-headed formation on October 11. CHRISTOPHER PATON

A CHANCE conversation just weeks before an event saw new-build Peppercorn A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* head north of the border to visit the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway to star in the three-day Steam, Steel, Road & Rail gala on October 9-11 – and stay on later into the month for additional running days.

The event was originally billed as a home fleet-only affair, with rising transport costs and limited locomotive options looking to put a stop to any guest traction appearing. However, just weeks beforehand, the BKR announced it had successfully booked *Tornado* for an impromptu visit.

"It was by pure chance," said organiser Taylor Shaw. "I decided to contact the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust and ask if *Tornado* was doing anything or would be sitting around spare. Commercial director Graeme Bunker James said it was free and sent us the costings for the proposed move to Bo'ness.

"Using that, some of us drew up a proposal for the visit, which was submitted to our board of directors, who were very happy with what we were suggesting and approved it.

"The only issue was that being so close to the event, it was a challenge to get the marketing out there with such little time spare."

The event roster drew on much of the BRK's available locomotive and rolling stock fleet, with Class 26 No. 26038, Class 37 No. 37025 *Inverness TMD* and a Class 117 DMU appealing to diesel enthusiasts, while *Tornado* was joined by the two operational resident steam locomotives, Caledonian Railway 439 class 0-4-4T No. 15189 and Neilson, Reid & Co. 0-6-0T No. 5710 *Lord Roberts*.

In addition to top-and-tail and double-headed workings, the 4.50pm departure from Bo'ness on Sunday was triple-headed by all three working steam locomotives.

A fish and chips dining train ran on the Friday evening, with the following day offering an on-board whisky tasting session. At Bo'ness station on Sunday, a gathering of classic cars and road vehicles was present, uniting the heritage of two rival forms of transportation.

Tornado remained in Scotland beyond the event and worked trains on the BKR during the half term dates of October 13/14 and 16-18.

➜ **See also Main Line News, page 56.**

Moseley Railway Trust hosts major international meeting

THE Moseley Railway Trust hosted the 34th International Feldbahntreffen in collaboration with the Frankfurt Feldbahn Museum in October. It was the first time that the pan-European meeting has been held in the UK.

More than 100 delegates of eight nationalities and representing well-known and respected narrow gauge museums, railways and associations from around Europe arrived to participate in a programme of visits arranged by the trust.

On October 8, the group visited the West Lancashire Light Railway, where Bagnall 0-4-0ST *Sybil* and Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0T+WT were demonstrated. The next day, the group visited the Statfold Barn Railway and then the trust's Apedale Valley Light Railway on October 10, where as many locomotives as possible were demonstrated, including a very rare German 'Struver' brought on a trailer by its owner.

During the afternoon, a grand cavalcade took place around the Apedale Field Railway. The trust wondered if having 47 locomotives running on a heritage railway site during a single day set a record.

On October 11, the Staffordshire Narrow Gauge Railway Society hosted the group at the Amerton Railway.

Trust spokesman Simon Lomax said: "This goes to show what can be achieved when smaller organisations work together.

"We have made many memories and really put all four venues on the map of European narrow gauge railways."





Above: Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0WT No. 1238 of 1926 and Hunslet 4-6-0T No. 1215 of 1916 in steam at Apedale on October 10. MRT

Left: Part of the grand cavalcade of 47 locomotives around the Apedale Field Railway on October 10. MRT

Sun shines on Toddington's autumn gala spectacular

By Ian Crowder

AN established event on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway is the Mixed Traction Gala – an occasion with no special visitors, but the chance to operate as many steam and heritage diesel locomotives as possible. Always popular with both volunteers and visitors, the 2026 event, held on October 10/11, was no exception.

Alex Caulfield, joint chairman of the organising team, said: "We see this as, first and foremost, a reward for our hard-working volunteers to let their hair down and enjoy a busy timetable using our resident fleet of locomotives. It's a chance to do something a bit different that features our goods train, a fair amount of double-heading, and a daily 'express' service, which makes it attractive to visitors too.

"With pleasant weather, we saw a great turnout all weekend, Saturday particularly seeing many packed trains."

Highlights included the sheer variety of motive power with something for everyone, whether they are into steam or diesel, as well as free rein to visit the workshops at Toddington and Carriage & Wagon department at Winchcombe, plus model railways and a large gallery of lineside photography. At Broadway, there was a last opportunity to explore the signalbox before it is fully commissioned next month.

Alex said: "The opening of Broadway 'box will give us greater flexibility for event organisation in the future as we'll be able to cross trains there once the Platform 2 building is completed – and as visitors will have seen, that is progressing well, with the roof and canopy steelwork finished."



Left: LMS 'Black Five' 4-6-0 No. 45110 departs Toddington, passing Chicken Curve on the goods in autumnal Cotswold colours on October 11. JOHN TITLOW



Below: GWR 2-8-0 No. 2807 runs off Stanway Viaduct while approaching Toddington on October 11. JOHN TITLOW

For Alex, also a guard and a volunteer in the carriage and wagon department and the driving force for the overhaul of the railway's many goods vehicles, the highlight was the goods train.

"We turned out our longest goods to date with 17 wagons, including a newly restored Gulf tanker in a striking blue livery," he said. "We organised our usual £10 trips on the brake vans and, of course, this is a very popular part of our special events."

The steam highlight was the '15 Guinea Special' LMS 'Black Five' No. 45110, which is on extended loan from West Coast Railways and will leave the railway early in November. Its remaining public operating days include October 24, 27-29 and 31, followed by a photographic charter. Also operating were black-liveried GWR 2-8-0s Nos. 2807 and 3850, while flying the flag for lined green was new-build 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange*. All four steam locomotives operated on both days.

Diesel interest on Saturday included Class 47 No. 47105 and the pairing of Class 20 Nos. 20228 and 20137, while green Class 37 D6948 and Class 45 No. 45149 were rostered on Sunday. Class 121 'bubblecar' W55003 worked both days, stopping at Hayles Abbey Halt, a particularly popular service linking Winchcombe with Broadway, as well as a return trip to Cheltenham Racecourse each day.

West Somerset bucking the trend as year ends ahead of budget

DESPITE challenging weather and a difficult economic climate, the West Somerset Railway has achieved some very encouraging results in 2026, finishing ahead of budget for the year to the end of September, said interim chief executive Clive Hetherington.

"This is a considerable achievement and reflects the dedication of the railway's staff and volunteers, together with the enduring appeal of one of Britain's longest heritage railways," he said.

"The railway has delivered a busy programme of services and many special events, welcoming visitors to enjoy the unique experience of travelling through the beautiful Somerset countryside.

"An increasingly important contributor to the railway's business has been the growth in charter trains visiting Minehead. These special services bring additional income, introduce the railway to new audiences, and make valuable use of the line beyond its regular passenger services. Their contribution is becoming ever more significant as the railway works to strengthen its financial position. A trip to the seaside around Minehead will always be an attractive destination – a real plus for charter companies. With results ahead of budget, the WSR can look forward with cautious optimism, securing a sustainable future for this much-loved heritage railway.

"The railway has no borrowings and an ambitious restoration programme for rolling stock in place funded by the West Somerset Railway Association and some exciting plans for a new visitor centre and other significant developments at Bishops Lydeard funded by the West Somerset Railway Trust."

➜ Triple September success for West Somerset: read more in News, pages 38/39.

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Metro drivers who run steam in spare time

TWO Tyne & Wear Metro drivers are playing a role in maintaining the North East's pioneering railway heritage.

In their spare time, Michael Darling and Rob Kitching drive locomotives at the Stephenson Steam Railway in North Tyneside, where they are long-serving volunteers.

Michael, 36, of Monkseaton, a Metro driver of 13 years and a volunteer at the heritage line since he was 17, said: "I've had an interest in trains ever since I was a child. It's a niche hobby that not many people get to do. I get a lot of pleasure from it. It's both exciting and interesting.

"It took me seven years to become a qualified steam train driver. I'm now an inspector and do all the assessments for our other volunteers. It's incomparable to driving the new Metro trains. I love doing both.

"Our steam train rides take in a two-mile stretch of what was the Blyth and Tyne Line; it's a steep section. It was rebuilt for the Metro test track in the late 1970s. When that was vacated, it allowed the Stephenson Railway to be created.

"The heritage tours we run are educational. Steam trains stopped running in our region in the late 1970s. It's important that people still get to see them, experience travelling on them, and learn about our region's railway heritage. After all, we gave railways to the world thanks to George Stephenson.



Left: Michael Darling and Rob Kitching at the Stephenson Steam Railway with resident Peckett 0-6-0ST No. 1970 of 1939 *Ashington No. 5*. NEXUS

"I think it's important we are doing what we are doing at the museum, which is entirely voluntary, as it keeps heritage alive, celebrating steam trains in their heyday. We get visitors from all walks of life and from all around the world."

Rob, 35, from Durham, a Metro driver of eight years and a Stephenson Railway volunteer for the last 10, said: "There's always been a family interest in trains, and that has passed down to me. I worked at Beamish, driving trains there. That opened the door to my role at Stephenson and helped to pave the way for me to become a Metro driver.

"Steam trains are just amazing. They are part of the heritage of the North East and a testament to how our region led the way with this technology. It's nice to be part of something that celebrates it for future generations."

The line's museum manager, Geoff Woodward, said: "Volunteers are at the heart of SSR. Their passion, knowledge and enthusiasm bring the railway to life. They volunteer their time because they care deeply about the railway and its history, and that makes a real difference to the experience we can offer our visitors. We really couldn't do what we do without them, and we are incredibly grateful for everything they contribute."



Right: Exmoor Steam Railway 2-6-2 No. 350 of 2024 *Carol Ann* passing over the 12 ¼in gauge Mease Valley Light Railway's road crossing at Statfold Country Park. The locomotive hauled several services during the Warley Model Railway Club's weekend at the Statfold Barn Railway on October 10/11. BEN FAGAN

Yorkshire Wolds extends onto original trackbed

THE Yorkshire Wolds Railway formally launched its extension into 'field three' on October 18.

Building the extension began in April, and the lengthened journey from Fimber Halt will now see service running on what was the trackbed of the original Malton & Driffield Junction Railway, which closed 50 years before the heritage line was established in 2008.

YWR infrastructure director Ivan Merino said: "It's very exciting to be able to launch this section of track. Our members have worked in all weathers to get extension finished and have done a great job. To finally be able to run on the original trackbed is particularly exciting!"

➜ To volunteer on the YWR or make a donation towards its extension project, visit yorkshirewoldsrailway.org.uk or phone 01377 338053



Former Shotton Steelworks English Electric 0-4-0DH No. 5576 of 1979 *Sir Tatton Sykes* moves along the newly-laid extension. PHIL ROBSON/YWR

IN BRIEF

Carriage pair set off on restoration journey to Wales

TWO Victorian-era carriages that were built for the Somerset & Dorset Railway have departed Shillingstone for restoration at the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway.

Six-wheeled Third Class carriages Nos. 98 and 114 were built in 1894 and 1890 respectively. After being withdrawn from service in 1932, they were incorporated into the construction of a dwelling near Chichester. Acquired by the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust in 1996 (but not arriving at Shillingstone until 2023), they have remained unrestored, awaiting their chance at a bright new future.

On October 10, both vehicles departed for Boston Lodge works, where their exteriors will be fully renovated. Work is expected to begin on the first of the two in the new year and last about 18 months, after which it will return to Somerset for the interior to be restored by the North Dorset Railway's volunteers and eventually join the operational fleet, with the second following shortly after.

When discovered, they were without underframes. At present, they both sit on chassis recovered from six-wheeled milk tankers which are slightly too long, but they will be reduced to the correct length as part of the restoration process.

New lease secures Northumberland line

VOLUNTEERS aiming to reopen the Woodhorn Narrow Gauge Railway in Ashington have been granted a 25-year lease by Northumberland County Council.

The two-thirds-of-a-mile-long 2ft gauge line alongside Queen Elizabeth II Country Park opened in 1994 but closed again in 2018 due to a volunteer shortage.

The current 20-strong group began restoring the line in 2024 with the purchase of new sleepers and agreed the lease terms with the council in September following help from Newcastle law firm Muckle LLP.

The council has given the group £15,000 to restore Lakeside Halt platform and £5000 to restore rolling stock. The group aims to reopen the railway next Easter.

Torquay signalbox sold

THE Grade II-listed three-floor, rectangular brick and glass fronted former signalbox at unstaffed Torre station, on the Newton Abbot to Paignton line, has sold for £32,500 at an online sale held by Paul Fosh Auctions. As reported, the 'box, which retains it non-functioning rows of signal levers, has full planning for conversion to a holiday home.

New Zealand steam tour halted after tragic death of teenage girl

By Robin Jones

AN investigation was launched following the death of a 17-year-old girl as the Glenbrook Vintage Railway's steam-hauled 'Spiral Steam Spectacular' passed through Te Awamutu station on New Zealand's North Island main trunk line on Sunday, September 20.

The tour started from Waiuku and Glenbrook with the GVR's heritage main line diesel DBR No. 1254 in charge, double-heading in front of Steam Incorporated Ltd's Ab class Pacific No. 608 *Passchendaele*. From Hamilton, Ab 608 led the train south through Te Awamutu, Ōtorohanga, Te Kūiti and Taumarunui before climbing the Raurimu Spiral to Waimarino and returning north.

Witnesses reported that the girl, who was not a passenger or railway volunteer, fell beneath the train as it was leaving Te Awamutu, where it had stopped at 5.25pm. Emergency services arrived at about 6.20pm.

The tour was cut short following the incident and passengers were returned to Glenbrook station via bus.

With assistance from KiwiRail, the empty train was returned to Auckland the next morning.

Glenn Deed, chairman of the GVR Charitable Trust board, said the group was "shocked and devastated."

"We are cooperating fully with police and the relevant agencies as they investigate the circumstances of this tragic incident," he added.

NZ Transport Agency, the regulator for rail safety, said: "Police are investigating, and NZTA Waka Kotahi is gathering information about the incident to determine if a separate investigation will be undertaken by NZTA as the rail safety regulator."

The Transport Accident Investigation Commission was also gathering evidence.

Following the tragedy, Steam Incorporated recommended to its members and other New Zealand operators that heritage services should suspended as a precaution while investigations were undertaken.

Waipā District Council's mayor, Mike Pettit, extended deepest sympathies to the family and loved ones of the girl.

He said the tragedy had affected families, travellers, volunteers and members of the community who had either been on board or gathered to see the steam train pass through Te Awamutu.



Ab Pacific No. 608 *Passchendaele*, named in 1925 in honour of New Zealand troops who died in the First World War battle of 1917. GVR

"What was meant to be a special and memorable day was instead marked by tragedy and sadness," he said. About 100 people including the victim's relatives, community members, civic leaders and emergency services personnel gathered at Anchor Park, near Te Awamutu station for a mid-morning vigil on September 27 to pay their respects.

Ab Pacific No. 608 *Passchendaele*, built in the workshops of Addington Railway, Christchurch, in 1915, was donated by New Zealand Railways to the New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society in 1967 as the class leader.

It was towed to Ferrymead in 1972 and remained there until 1993, when heritage rail operator Steam Incorporated of Paekakariki indicated an interest in leasing and restoring it, following which it was recommissioned on April 25, 2014, and main line certified.

Change of identity planned for Standard tank on autumn tour

By Owen Hayward

BR Standard 4MT No. 80078 is set for another busy few months, with appearances at three heritage lines booked – including one event that will see it take on the identity of a scrapped member of the class.

Normally resident at the Mid-Norfolk Railway, on October 9 the 2-6-4T was taken by road to the Spa Valley Railway in readiness for working trains on the October 16-18 Beer Festival weekend.

Owned by Stewart Robinson, for the past few years No. 80078 has typically returned to the south and spent the autumn and winter months at the SpVR, where it alternates with Bulleid light Pacific No. 34053 *Sir Keith Park* during the line's successful Polar Express workings, and this will again be the case this year – while making guest appearances at two other lines.

At the Dean Forest Railway's October 31/November 1 Royal Forest of Steam gala, No. 80078 will break new ground for the class as the first of its type to traverse the line between Lydney and Parkend in the heritage era and possibly even the branch as a whole, with none recorded there during the BR era.

It will join previously announced guest LNWR Webb Coal Tank 0-6-2T No. 1054, which appears thanks to the Bahamas Locomotive Society and Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, the pair operating alongside resident WR 0-6-0PT No. 9681, Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn-built Austerity 0-6-0ST No. WD152 *Rennes* and Peckett 0-4-0ST No. 2147 *Uskmouth No. 1*.

Featuring multiple passenger trains, demonstration goods workings and more, it will round off another busy year before Santa specials begin on November 28. For further information, see deanforestrailway.co.uk/steam-gala/

No. 80078 will then head to the Kent & East Sussex Railway for the line's November 7/8 Southern Through the Ages event which, as reported last issue, will be the final running weekend for LBSCR A1X 'Terrier' No. 2678 *Knowle*. It will be withdrawn from service to await overhaul immediately afterwards.

For the occasion, the BR Standard may take on the identity of another member of the class, namely No. 80140. Outshopped from Brighton Works in July 1956, this locomotive was first allocated to Neasden but then moved to the SR with allocations to Tunbridge Wells, Brighton, Redhill, Feltham and Nine Elms before it was withdrawn 21 years later. Conversely, when new in 1954 No. 80078 was allocated to Plaistow, Tilbury, Stratford, Shrewsbury and Croes Newydd sheds, meaning it was never an SR locomotive itself.

The KESR's gala will showcase the different forms of traction that operated across the region, with Knowle and the 4MT kept company by Class 205 'Thumper' No. 1118 and Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 132 *Sapper*, the latter masquerading as scrapped J94 No. 68032.

As well as passenger services, which will include *Knowle* hauling the vintage carriages, mixed and goods trains will also run between Tenterden Town and Bodiam.

For full details, visit kesr.org.uk/southern-through-the-ages/



BR Standard 4MT No. 80078 will star at galas at the Dean Forest and Kent & East Sussex railways this autumn. NICK BURGESS/KESR

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Autumn diesel days another Severn Valley winner

THE Severn Valley Railway chalked up another gala success with 12 locomotives running during its Autumn Diesel Bash, taking place on October 1-4.

"We had a really busy four days," said SVR CEO Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster. "An intensive timetable over the 16 miles of line between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth allowed passengers to enjoy an impressive range of locomotives in action. Operationally, everything went very well, and it was interesting to see seven sets of stock out, as well as the DMU. Our thanks go to all those involved for making this year's event a success.



Class 42 D821 *Greyhound* heads a Bridgnorth-bound service during the Autumn Diesel Bash. MATT FIELDING

"A last-minute guest became available in the form of Class 47 No. 47804, which was able to stay on after accompanying No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman* to our steam gala (see feature, pages 84/85).

"We are incredibly grateful to West Coast Railways for facilitating its appearance."

Meanwhile, Class 55 No. 55009 *Alycidon* is set to return to the SVR for the December 29 Winter Diesel Day – the first time a visiting locomotive has been booked for this otherwise home-fleet-driven annual fixture. It will be the second occasion this year that the Deltic will have operated over the line between Kidderminster Town and Bridgnorth, it having appeared at the line's diesel gala in May, as reported in issue 346.

Alycidon is currently at the Deltic Preservation Society's workshops at Barrow Hill Roundhouse undergoing preparatory work in readiness for a main line return; thanks to the close working relationships between the two organisations and operating company Rail Adventure, an opportunity was made available for it to return to the SVR.



Visiting No. 47804 awaiting departure from Kidderminster Town on October 2. DAVID BISSETT

"We are incredibly grateful to the owners and operators of No. 55009 for making this visit possible," said Gus. Tickets are on sale at svr.co.uk/specialevents/winter-diesel-day/

The visit comes just days before the 45th anniversary of the last Deltic-hauled service was run by BR on January 2, 1982. All three of the locomotives involved with that farewell excursion have been preserved. Although *Alycidon* was one of them, it did not actually pull the train. Instead, it shadowed it in both directions as a standby in case of a failure of classmates Nos. 55015 *Tulyar* (which hauled it from King's Cross to Edinburgh) or 55022 *Royal Scots Grey* (which worked the return to London).

Mid-Hants educational programme recognised with national award

THE Watercress Line Heritage Railway Trust has been recognised with a prestigious Sandford Award for Heritage Learning, celebrating the railway's outstanding work in providing engaging, inspiring and curriculum-linked learning experiences for children and young people.

The award comes from the Heritage Education Trust, a national charity and the only organisation providing independent quality assurance for heritage sites in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The award itself was first established in 1978 by the Sandford Group, a working party chaired by Lord Sanford established the year before to bring together education and heritage sector representatives to promote high standards of educational services based at historic properties. The first six awards were presented in 1978, with the HET established in 1986 to take on its operation and delivery. As reported in News, page 26, a Sandford Award has also just gone to Hopetown Darlington.

The independently assessed award recognises the Mid-Hants Railway's distinctive approach to bringing history, engineering and the local environment to life through its historic line, conserved stations, working restoration facilities and dedicated education team.

The assessors' official citation stated: "The WLHRT is an inspiring place to learn. The experienced education officer enables children to study national curriculum-related topics, whether riding on a magnificent period steam train or visiting any of four conserved stations."

They particularly highlighted the railway's Operation Pied Piper programme, which explores the experiences and emotions of children evacuated during the Second World War. A combination of a steam train journey, workshops, archival material and practical activities allows pupils to engage with the subject in an immersive way.

The railway's education offer also connects national history with the local area. Other programmes include Victorians and the Railway, The Watercress Line Through Time and Travel and Transport, using archival photographs, maps, the railway landscape and the knowledge of volunteers to help children understand the heritage around them. Alongside history, the assessors recognised the potential of the railway's working engineering environment to support STEM learning.

The award also recognised the contribution of the railway's volunteers. A total of 16 education volunteers work alongside the education officer, bringing a wealth of experience and local knowledge to the learning programme. MHR learning coordinator Dan Ball said: "It is particularly rewarding to see the dedication of our education team and volunteers recognised. This award is a wonderful recognition of the meaningful learning experiences we strive to create for every visitor and school group."



The Wensleydale Railway has repainted Class 142 'Pacer' DMU No. 142060 in Northern Spirit livery. The distinctive turquoise and lime green paint scheme introduced in 1998 for the Regional Railways North East franchise was operated by Merseyside Transport Limited, which was purchased by Arriva in 2000. No. 142060 is believed to be the only traction in the heritage sector carrying the livery. WR



Linda approaches Ddualllt with an evening train containing carriage No. 14, otherwise known as 'The Snapper Bar.' On the horizon to the locomotive's left stands the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, which remains rail-connected to the Conwy Valley line at Blaenau Ffestiniog, although the route between them is very much overgrown.



Over or under: Recently outshopped in the FR's striking lined red, double Fairlie *Merddin Emrys* climbs towards the Deviation at Ddualt, while *James Spooner* awaits departure from the station below with an empty slates working to Tan y Bwlch.

Ffestiniog revives the Victorian era – but *Welsh Pony* stopped for repairs

Words and pictures by Owen Hayward

THE Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's annual Victorian weekend took place on October 2-4 and once again drew crowds to North Wales – but the event faced a setback after the sudden failure of one of its star locomotives.

Recreating services and sights that would have once been common throughout the history of both narrow gauge lines, although predominantly focused on the FR side, this particular occasion (formerly known as Bygones) gives the railway an opportunity to bring out nearly all of its toys from their boxes, with vintage carriages and wagons of all types making appearances on services and transporting visitors to eras far beyond just the Victorian one.

Each of the three days started not long after 7am, with the first outing to Blaenau Ffestiniog behind one of the George England 04-0STTs at the front of some of the line's oldest passenger carriages, promptly followed by both the 'anti-gravity' train (an uphill working to position the slate wagons ready for their free-rolling descent) and mixed goods.

Set formations changed throughout each day, with workings both gaining and losing vehicles, at times resulting in situations whereby almost no two trains were exactly the same. The exceptions to this were the Ff&WHR's daily scheduled services (the 'Woodland Wanderer' to Tan y Bwlch and 'Mountain Spirit' to Blaenau on the FR side and the 'Gelert Explorer' to Beddgelert on the WHR route, along which the full-line 'Harbourmaster' and 'Snowdonia Star' trips also ran), which comprise the railway's more modern coaching stock and locomotives but ensured sufficient passenger workings to allow visitors to hop on and off of trains throughout the day without fear of long waits.

As well as the full line and shorter-distance workings along the FR, additional trips to both Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu on the WHR also made use of some of the vintage locomotives, with single Fairlie *Taliesin*, main line Hunslet *Linda* and several of the Englands taking it in turns to operate these journeys.

However, on October 4, No. 5 *Welsh Pony* arrived back at Porthmadog where it was discovered that part of its reversing equipment had broken off, the damaged component in question later being found by the crew of another service, and so it had to be taken out of service for the remainder of the event. It is another unfortunate setback for this particular locomotive which was briefly taken out of service in 2023 when a crank pin on a driving wheel was found to be loose, along with the discovery of cracking in the wheel castings, and again during 2025 with axlebox issues.

Furthermore, *Welsh Pony* had only returned to service following the rectification of the latter issue at the end of July. It now faces a further period out of use while the broken component is replaced. In order to fill the gap its withdrawal created in the roster for Sunday, some diagrams were swapped which brought *Linda* off of a special working scheduled for supporters of the upcoming developments of Blaenau Ffestiniog station (that working instead being covered by a diesel locomotive) and on to FR event trains.

Alongside the train services, costumed reenactors brough the atmosphere to life, with visitors and railway staff and volunteers all donning suitable attire for the occasion. Classic cars filled the station car park



Above: No. 5 *Welsh Pony* departs from Porthmadog on the gloriously clear and sunny morning of October 3. Later that day, this George England locomotive was failed after its reverser broke – the latest incident in a series of misfortunes that have troubled it during the last few years.



Right: A 50-wagon-strong gravity train descends The Spiral at Ddualt as it heads back down the line towards Porthmadog on October 3.

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at Porthmadog, while traction engines, road rollers, lorries and miniature railways could be found at Minffordd. Visitors to Tan y Bwlch on Saturday enjoyed tours of the recently renovated station house as part of a wider tour taking in the history of the station as a whole, while the Royal Oakeley Band performed outside the café on Sunday afternoon.

Challenging planning

Event organiser and FR operations manager Michael Baker said: "This year was slightly different to previous ones as the commercial department asked us to ensure we had both of the standard operating trains scheduled on the FR side, so we had to build the timetable to fit around those.

"Feedback from previous events was that Porthmadog was too congested, so we looked at spreading things better across the railway to relieve that. It meant we had a nice hive of activity early in the morning, then a break for those service trains, followed by more cameos and scenes in the afternoon.

"We were being very experimental by mixing up the formations this year – we haven't done quite as much shunting and reforming of things during an event as we have at this one. I particularly liked the mixed workings and having them pass gravity trains at Tan y Bwlch.

"Previously we have started and ended some of the days with photo shoots at Porthmadog and Minffordd stations, but those put a pressure on operating staff as they extend the day at both ends, so we opted to leave them out this time around.

"Likewise, some people asked about the Quarry Hunslets. This event has traditionally been about the FR and WHR, so we focus on the locomotives and stock that worked their trains, but maybe the smaller ones will come out in future."

Next year's event will take a different slot in the annual calendar as it moves to June 18-20, which will hopefully result in it benefitting from nicer weather. In its place, the weekend of October 1-3, 2027 will be taken by a Railways of the World gala, which promises to bring in some interesting locomotives representing rail industry from around the globe alongside food, drink and entertainment to match. The annual 'Snowdonian' excursion, which offers an opportunity to travel the full length of the Ff&WHR in one go, will run on April 27/28.



A throwback to the 1980s at Tunbridge Wells West with a line-up at the Spa Valley Railway's locomotive shed on September 25. From left to right are: Nos. 33063, 09004, 25185 and 1317. CHRIS GEE

Double diesel photo events bolster fund for Spa Valley Railway's bridge appeal

By Chris Gee

PHOTOGRAPHIC charters are proven invaluable avenues of raising funds for projects at heritage railways, and on September 25, Northern Diesel Photo Charters ran a night shoot at the Spa Valley Railway's Tunbridge Wells West depot featuring a line-up of BR blue diesels evoking the period before 1985.

Attended by 30 photographers, the evening raised £2000 for the railway's Broom Lane bridge appeal. Situated between High Rocks and Groombridge, the structure is essential to the SpVR and its continued operation. As reported in issue 341, the railway made the decision to replace this particular bridge, and a new one was installed between February 22 and April 18 this year at a cost of more than £630,000 – an investment the line is continuing to pay off.

Northern Diesel Photo Charters specialises in main line railway photographic shoots to raise funds for charitable causes, along with heritage railway charters to raise money for the host venue and whatever project it needs support for.

BR blue photoshoots are very popular, and Tunbridge Wells West shed offered an authentic backdrop for the occasion. The depot here closed on August 10, 1985, soon after the closure of the line from Eridge. The railway's volunteers worked hard to tidy the yard in front of the building in the lead-up to the evening to improve its presentation. It then used authentic locomotives to create a scene accurate for the Southern Region in the period before that closure date.

The volunteers prepared the front of former Hither Green-based Class 33 No. 33063 which, while operational, is currently being overhauled. It allowed the locomotive to be framed with careful positioning to show off the specially painted cab front.

Alongside it was Class 09 No. 09004, another ex-Hither Green resident and a type wholly associated with the Southern Region of that time. The South Devon Railway's Class 25 No. 25185, which is on long-term loan to the SpVR, also featured. A former Cricklewood and Willesden locomotive , it may well have ventured onto the Southern in that era. Completing the scene was Class 207 Thumper DEMU No. 1317, which had worked some of the final day's services on July 6, 1985, with the railway even providing the actual headboards that appeared on that date.

While not a SR-allocated locomotive itself, the Class 31 fleet was widespread throughout the UK, and so resident example No. 31430 *Sister Dora* also featured.

Tonbridge depot

The evening was organised in conjunction with a separate photo shoot at the nearby GB Railfreight depot at Tonbridge, which featured examples of the firm's Class 73 fleet. This event raised £4700 for Great Ormond Street Hospital, with the line-up containing four of these electro-diesel locomotives, each in a different heritage livery.

No. 73119 *Paul Taylor* has been outshopped in Dutch engineers' grey and yellow, while No. 73141 has recently been treated to the BR large logo grey look and carries the name *Spa Valley Railway*, which it received at Eridge in 2022 as the line celebrated its 25th anniversary. BR blue No. 73142 *Broadlands* and Network South East-liveried No. 73128 *Kent & East Sussex Railway* concluded the multi-coloured locomotive line-up, with the four posed around the depot.

Arranging the two events back-to-back increased the fundraising potential for both charities, with lighting provided by Oliver Turner and Jasper Schofield-Linnell.

Further details of raising funds for the Broom Lane bridge project can be found by visiting spavalleyrailway.co.uk/fundraising/broom-lane-bridge-appeal



A separate photographic session ran at Tonbridge depot on September 26 featuring Class 73 Nos. 73119 *Paul Taylor*, 73141 *Spa Valley Railway*, 73142 *Broadlands* and 73128 *Kent & East Sussex Railway*, with all locomotives wearing a different heritage-style scheme. CHRIS GEE

Boilermaker honoured with future skills training award

By Sally Clifford

A STALWART of the boiler-making industry has been recognised for his role in helping to preserve heritage skills for the future.

Gordon Newton was presented with the National Transport Trust's Lifetime Achievement Award 2026 by its president, Lady Judy McAlpine, at a ceremony at her Fawley Hill home in Buckinghamshire on September 8, alongside and entertainer and TV presenter Johnny Ball.

Gordon said he was "over the moon" to receive the award, which acknowledges his involvement with BESTT, the Boiler & Engineering Skills Training Trust, an organisation he helped to set up in 2000.

In his role as BESTT chairman, Gordon continues to pass on the knowledge and skills he gleaned through a lifetime of working in the boiler-making industry to ensure that they are preserved for future generations working in the heritage sector, including heritage railways.

As the sixth and last generation of his family to own and manage Israel Newton & Sons Ltd, a 200-year-old boiler-making business which was established in Bradford, Gordon spent his working life repairing and building riveted boilers for the steam heritage sector.

In 2000, the company passed on to a new owner in a new location, while Gordon remained committed to ensuring heritage skills survive – and his actions speak louder than words.

Through his involvement in BESTT, Gordon helps to design and deliver training courses on topics such as riveting and repairing and maintaining heritage steam boilers.

More than 30 young people have embarked on BESTT training courses since 2014, learning boiler smithing and mechanical repair skills.

One-year traineeships have been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, while others have participated in short training courses with BESTT.

Gordon has also contributed to courses in other subjects, and he is involved in the organisation's administration.

NTT awards director Stuart Wilkinson said: "Gordon undertakes much of the administration of BESTT, which has included acting as treasurer as well as chairman.



National Transport Trust president Lady Judy McAlpine with Gordon Newton, chairman of BESTT, and Johnny Ball. BRIAN GOODING

"He is often the recognised face of BESTT, whether professionally, such as for the Boiler Code of Practice Committee, or in promoting the organisation throughout the steam heritage sector.

"Managing and promoting training is often a challenge, and Gordon has had to steer BESTT through many of those. At the age of 83, he remains energetically committed to the organisation. Our congratulations go to him for this very well deserved award."

Charwelton plays a part in returning steam to the Avon Valley

By Owen Hayward

STEAM returned to the Avon Valley Railway in September thanks to an opportune agreement after the line was used to test a locomotive recently overhauled at Bill Parker's Flour Mill Workshops at Bream in the Forest of Dean.

Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST No. 1955 of 1917 *Charwelton* served at the Parkgate Iron & Steel Company's site in Charwelton, Northamptonshire, and took its name from the village. It spent 25 years moving ironstone quarry trains before moving to the firm's quarry in Sproxton, Lincolnshire; at the time of arrival, it was reported to have been "incredibly worn-out" and so spent two years first undergoing a major overhaul.

The Sproxton site closed in 1963, and *Charwelton* was subsequently bought by the Kent & East Sussex Railway Trust, where it was used on works trains to rebuild the line. In 1973, it was discovered that the firebox had severe cracking, so it was unable to run when the line reopened as a heritage route the following year. It was subsequently sold again, this time to the Rother Valley Railway Ltd in 1976, which continues to own it today. Since then, it has enjoyed several stints in steam, the most recent of which ended in April 2017 after boiler faults were discovered.

Charwelton was subsequently moved to the Flour Mill workshops for contract overhaul, which has seen new cylinders cast and boiler made and all six wheels retyred, as well as the usual refurbishment of existing components for reuse. With work nearing completion, at the start of September it was taken to the AVR for running-in to be carried out, which allowed for further fettling to be undertaken.

Stepping up to help

With the AVR currently short of a suitable steam locomotive to work trains across its full length, an agreement was signed to enable *Charwelton* to work trains there, with it pulling its first public trains at the September 26/27 Festival of Transport.

The weekend saw a display of vintage vehicles (including lorries, motorcycles and cars) take over the station car park at Bitton, with classic railway and transport films screened in a static carriage. Vintage buses ran between an off-site car park and Bitton, where visitors were also able to try their hand at riding Penny Farthings before hopping on board services worked by *Charwelton* and visiting Class 31 No. 31130, which has recently undergone engine repairs. On September 25, classmate No. 31101 moved to Lydney Junction on the Dean Forest Railway to undergo a contract engine overhaul with Valley Rail Preservation Ltd.



Manning Wardle *Charwelton* departs Bitton station on September 27 during its first weekend of passenger services after completing overhaul. ADAM ASHFORD

Charwelton remained shedded at Bitton into October to work additional service trains and will soon return to the KESR to enter service there. In its place, the AVR is expected to welcome another red locomotive, Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' 0-6-0ST No. 1589 *Newstead* (picture, news pages 28/29), which will work festive services there before returning to the North Norfolk Railway in early 2027.

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Volunteers praised as three locomotive restoration projects are recognised in transport trust's annual awards ceremony

By Robin Jones

THREE railway locomotive restoration schemes received awards this year from the National Transport Trust at the Fawley Hill ceremony.

The Neve Valley Railway received its restoration award for work on Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST No. 1539 of 1924 *Derek Crouch*, one of the first locomotives that ran on the heritage line.

"The significance of this restoration is that its initial cosmetic overhaul and now full overhaul are being undertaken mainly by volunteers, except where the skills required would be beyond the small team," said NTT awards director Stuart Wilkinson. "In practical terms, this means they have contracted out a new tube plate, firebox, and firebox hole door.

"They rely on the NVR only for workshop accommodation and tools. The quality of workmanship is excellent, and the aim is that it will outlast two boiler tickets, and thus it will be 20 years before any reworking is required.

"The primary team are all young people, one of whom now works for the railway, one in engineering in Peterborough, and one for Locomotive Services Ltd in Crewe, demonstrating the value that heritage railways can bring to young engineers. It is planned to use it off-peak with three coaches for driver experiences and for goods demonstrations. It will be far more economic to run that most of its perhaps more glamorous shedmates."



Left: The rolling chassis of Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST No.2047 of 1926 *Warwickshire* after restoration work. NTT



Right: Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST No. 1539 of 1924 *Derek Crouch* being rebuilt at Wansford on the Nene Valley Railway. NTT

Leeds' last

The award to the Warwickshire Industrial Locomotive Preservation was for the restoration of the last locomotive manufactured by Manning Wardle in Leeds before the company was wound up in 1927.

After 40 years' service with the Rugby Portland Cement Company, 0-6-0ST No.2047 of 1926 *Warwickshire* was retired and in 1967 offered to the Warwickshire Railway Society, becoming the second locomotive to arrive on the nascent Severn Valley Railway, where it was used on works trains for a decade until it was sidelined with a boiler fault. Due to its boiler construction, it was declared unsafe in 1986 and abandoned.

The challenge faced by trust was to reconstruct a derelict steam locomotive into an operational one.

Israel Newton was hired to sort out the boiler and the mechanical work was carried out in the SVR workshops by volunteers. Stuart said: "Unsophisticated No. 2047 might be, but it is the sort of locomotive which will be able to earn its keep in the environment in which our preserved railways are now operating."

The Downpatrick & County Down Railway received its award for the restoration of Northern Ireland Railways 80 Class DEMU power car No. 69, which is undergoing substantial bodywork renewal, including the removal of corrosion, replacement of deteriorated steel sections and reversal of in-service modifications to return the vehicle to its correct late-1970s configuration.

Stuart said: "For a generation of passengers, the 80 Class defined rail travel in Northern Ireland. It also has a distinctive chapter of cross-border work, having been leased by Irish Rail to work the Cork to Cobh services in the 1980s.

Historic piece

"No. 69 also carries additional and unique historical weight as the final vehicle to operate as the Peace Train. It is the only surviving railway vehicle directly associated with the grassroots civic movement that publicly rejected paramilitary violence and advocated democratic progress in the closing phase of the conflict."

The approach prioritises long-term structural integrity rather than cosmetic refurbishment. Internally, the saloon is being restored to its original NIR specification, with accurate finishes and layout reinstated. At the same time, a dedicated wheelchair-accessible space is being incorporated.

The objective is to return No. 69 to active passenger service as a structurally sound, historically accurate and accessible representative example of Northern Ireland's principal post-1970 DMU class.



Northern Ireland Railways 80 Class DEMU power car No. 69 is undergoing substantial bodywork renewal. NTT

Funding appeal to complete Corfe Castle restoration launched

SWANAGE Railway volunteers have launched a £60,000 appeal to rebuild a distinctive wooden Victorian entrance canopy that was demolished by BR in the 1950s and complete the restoration of the Grade-II listed Corfe Castle station.

Designed to shelter passengers from the rain on the forecourt side of the station, the structure above the entrance to the booking hall was part of the Purbeck stone building constructed in 1884 ahead of the opening of the 10-mile Swanage branch in May 1885.

The Corfe Castle Station Canopy Appeal is being led by David Scott, its deputy stationmaster at Corfe Castle and a dedicated SR volunteer for more than 11 years who lives in the picture-postcard village dominated by its landmark medieval castle. He said: "We are hoping that the public will be able to help us complete the missing piece in the restoration of the much-loved Corfe Castle station that was started by dedicated Swanage Railway volunteers in the early 1990s when their relayed tracks reached the village.

"The canopy was an important practical and architectural feature and its removal in the mid-1950s – probably due to the wood it was made of becoming rotten and BR being unwilling to repair and restore it – left the entrance to the forecourt car park side of the station somewhat bare and exposed to the weather.

"Our canopy appeal is a chance for the public to help make the station complete again in the building's 141st year and the 50th anniversary of restoration work starting on the disused railway at a boarded-up Swanage station in 1976."



Corfe Castle station with its entrance porch in the 1930s.
ANDREW PM WRIGHT COLLECTION



David Scott at the entrance to Corfe Castle station in October.
ANDREW PM WRIGHT

Drawings for the new Victorian-style canopy have been produced by architect Peter Smith to a design that closely follows the original, while specialist contractor Target Structural has been engaged to guide with professional advice for the project.

Donations can be made by bank transfer to Barclays Bank quoting account number 60539112, sort code 20-68-79, and including the reference Corfe Canopy, or online via swanagerailwaytrust.enthuse.com/corfecanopy

Faversham reunion headlines Mid-Hants' triple-Ivatt gala gathering

By Owen Hayward



A triple-header of the three Ivatt Class 2 locomotives rounded off each day of the gala. On October 4, No. 41312 heads the consist, leading Nos. 41313 and 46447 towards Ropley at Northside Lane. PAUL LAWRENCE

SOME locomotive classes gain a following for their appearance and style, others for their performance. The Ivatt standard Class 2 may not be the most aesthetically pleasing to some, but they certainly fall into the latter category for many. Both the 2-6-2T and 2-6-0 designs were introduced in 1946 by Henry George Ivatt for the LMS and proved to be such a success that more were built post-Nationalisation for BR (with BR's own Standard Class 2 design utilising this as the basis with some modifications). Their allocation ended up being rather widespread, ranging from locations across the Southern Region in BR days to sheds such as Croes Newydd, Swansea.

In preservation they have continued to prove themselves to be versatile locomotives; while not quite as powerful as the Standard Class 4 (communally regarded by steam crews as 'the perfect locomotive for most heritage lines'), they are well-suited to some of the former branch line routes such as the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway in Yorkshire. Of the LMS-designed locomotives, four of the tank engine type remain in existence, while seven of the moguls survive. Comparatively, none of the tank engines remain from the BR batch, while four 2-6-0s survive; of these, one (No. 78059) is in the process of being rebuilt at the Bluebell Railway to fill the gap left by the absence of a 2-6-2T type.

Southern reunion

Successive numbers are not all too common amid preserved locomotives, but even less so is having them on the same railway, but for the weekend of October 2-4, the Mid-Hants Railway welcomed Isle of Wight-based No. 41313 to to join resident classmate No. 41312, both locomotives rapidly approaching the end of their boiler tickets. The former was making its third stop on its farewell tour of mainland Britain, having appeared at galas at both the Severn Valley (see pages 84/85) and West Somerset railways (pages 38/39). Following its MHR visit, it set off to Sussex in readiness for the Bluebell Railway's Standard Class-themed October 16-18 Giants of Steam weekend.

These two locomotives had previously spent some of their BR careers together; both outshopped in 1952, No. 41313 was first sent to Exmouth Junction, where it remained until being transferred to Three Bridges in 1955. No 41312, meanwhile, was allocated to Faversham and remained there for seven years. From 1955, it was joined by its numerical successor, and the pair transferred to Ashford together in June 1959, followed by Barnstaple Junction the following February. They remained shedmates there up until April 1963, when they then moved to Brighton together. It was not until May 1965 that they separated, with No. 41312 moved on to Bournemouth and No. 41313 heading for Eastleigh, its final allocation before withdrawal in October the following year. No. 41312 enjoyed one final transfer, this being to Nine Elms in April 1967, before it too was withdrawn three months later.

Both locomotives would meet again at the Woodham Brothers' scrapyard at Barry; No. 41312 remained there until August 1974, when it was acquired by the Caerphilly Railway Society, with No. 41313 being purchased the following year by the Ivatt Trust and moved to Quainton Road. The former example was moved to the MHR in 1995 after being bought by John Jones and saw restoration finally completed in December 1998, its first day in service being January 1, 1999. It has remained on the railway since, and its most recent overhaul was completed in January 2016.

No. 41313 had to wait a little longer before it ran again. Along with classmate No. 41298 (for which it was the intended source of spares), the pair (along with mogul No. 46447) were donated to the Isle of Wight Steam Railway in 2006. No. 41298 was the first of the two 2-6-2Ts to be completed, emerging from Havenstreet's workshops in 2014, whereafter an agreement was reached with the East Somerset Railway's Cranmore workshops (which had successfully returned No. 46447 to steam) to see No. 41313 taken there and fully restored. In June 2017, it ran for the first time in more than half a century, and it was joined by No. 41312 for the occasion.

The third 'two'

As if reuniting the two former shedmate 'Mickey Mouses' was not enough, the railway opted to pursue

Urie S15 No. 30506 passes through the Hampshire landscape with a goods working to Alton. NICK GILLIAM

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Visiting 'Mickey Mouse' tank No. 41313 arrives at Medstead & Four Marks station with the 1.10pm service from Ropley on October 4. NICK GILLIAM



Enjoying a break from Harry Potter filming duties, No. 6989 *Wightwick Hall* climbs past Chawton Woods shortly after departure from Alton with an Alresford-bound service. JAMES CORBEN

a third of the Ivatt Class 2 designs, bringing in No. 46447 from the ESR to join the occasion. Outshopped from Crewe in 1950, it served for 16 years before being withdrawn and sent to the same Barry scrapyard as the tank engines, arriving there in June 1967. It was purchased by the Ivatt Locomotive Trust in June 1972 and taken to Quainton Road with Nos. 41313 and 41298; when donated, it spent a short while at Havenstreet on static display before the agreement with the ESR was reached in 2012, which in turn saw the IOWSR acquire sole-surviving LBSCR E1 0-6-0T No. 110 as part of the arrangement. No. 46447 ran for the first time in October 2014 and has remained based at the ESR on an extended restore-and-run agreement since; unlike the two tank engines, which are imminently due for withdrawal, No. 46447 returned to service in May this year.

The trio of Ivatt locomotives took centre stage of the MHR's gala weekend, working both solo and double-headed trips along the line. Despite being near the end of their tickets, Nos. 41312 and 41313 showed no signs of their age and put in sterling performances throughout. A triple-headed working was scheduled to end each day, running between Alresford and Ropley only, although Friday's working saw No. 41313 miss out when an issue with its ashpan was discovered.

Joining the three Ivatts was WR Modified Hall 4-6-0 No. 6989 *Wightwick Hall* in its Hogwarts red livery. Currently between filming duties for the new HBO Harry Potter television series, it has spent the summer on the MHR to undergo the replacement of some of its boiler tubes. It is also booked to work some dedicated trains on October 26-28, during which round trips of the line are bookable behind this soon-to-be television star.

Another Western Region locomotive appearing was No. 4247, a member of the 4200 class of 2-8-0T locomotives, which is on an extended loan from the Dartmouth Steam Railway. Having arrived earlier this summer, the gala marked the first opportunity to ride behind it over the Hampshire Alps, and it is booked to remain on the MHR until the end of 2027.



Class 2 Mogul No. 46447 passes through Bowers Grove with the goods set on October 4. PAUL LAWRENCE

Completing the roster for the occasion was LSWR S15 4-6-0 No. 30506, which has been a stalwart of the fleet, having put in incredible service over the last few years while the MHR has faced something of a motive power shortage. It returned to service in June 2019 in Southern goods black with sunshine lettering, and in April 2025 it was briefly withdrawn for some firebox repairs which were completed in time to see it back in service just four months later, this time carrying unlined BR black.

SR Merchant Navy 4-6-2 No. 35005 *Canadian Pacific* was on display at Ropley and kept on standby. Also in the yard was Lord Nelson class 4-6-0 No. 850 *Lord Nelson*, which celebrated its centenary this summer. Part of the National Collection, it arrived on the MHR in 2009 and has remained there ever since; it ran up until 2015, when its boiler ticket expired, and has largely been kept stored at the back of the boiler workshops at Ropley since. While it is not currently on the cards for overhaul, there is an ambition to do so in the future, although such an action is still to be agreed with the National Railway Museum.



On long-term loan from the Dartmouth Steam Railway, No. 4247 powers up the 1-in-60 gradient towards Medstead on October 2. JAMES CORBEN

The gala saw a mix of full line and shuttle workings, including freight and mixed train formations creating some interesting sights for visitors to enjoy.

Hovertrain dismantled for restoration to start – and may become a cinema!

By Robin Jones

BRITAIN'S unique historic hovertrain has been sliced in half and lifted for the first time in 30 years at its Railworld Wildlife Haven home at Peterborough in a bid to pave the way for cosmetic restoration and ensure its survival.

The hovertrain, also known as a tracked hovercraft, is a vehicle suspended on a cushion of air, similar to a hovercraft but which operates on a guideway. Unlike conventional trains which use steel wheels on steel rails, hovertrains use air-based lifting systems and a smooth paved surface known as the track or guideway. The concept aims to eliminate rolling resistance and allow very high performance, while also simplifying the infrastructure needed to lay new lines.

Hovertrains were envisaged as a relatively low-risk and low-cost way to develop high-speed inter-city train services in an era when conventional rail seemed limited to maximum speeds of 140mph.

The first hovertrain was developed by Jean Bertin in the early 1960s in France, where they were marketed as the Aérotrain before being abandoned by the French government.

By the late 1960s, major development efforts in this sector were also underway in the UK and the USA. At the same time, British Rail ran an extensive study of the problems being experienced at high speeds on conventional tracks, leading to a new series of designs in the 1970s, beginning with the Advanced Passenger Train.

However, while hovertrains still offered reduced infrastructure costs compared to the APT and similar designs, plus the vision of 300mph journeys from London to Edinburgh in less than 90 minutes, these benefits were outweighed by the need for new lines. Conventional wheeled trains could run at low speed on existing routes.



A section of RTV 31 being lifted away from the concrete beam on September 16. RAILWORLD



A newly-made cradle sits alongside the partially dismantled RTV 31, ready to accommodate it once it is lifted off. RAILWORLD

In Britain, the first examples of serious hovertrain proposals came from Christopher Cockerell's Hovercraft Development Ltd in Hythe in 1960. A small prototype and a test track had been developed by 1963, but the project stalled through lack of funding. In 1967, the then government handed control of Hovercraft Development to the National Physical Laboratory.

Short trial

Construction of a proposed 20-mile test track started at Earith in Cambridgeshire in 1970, but rising costs led to only a three-mile-long section to Sutton Gault being laid on the flat Fenland site. Testing of the prototype vehicle, RTV (Research Test Vehicle) 31, which was constructed for the trials of the Linear Drive Motor, began in 1973, and that February it reached 104mph in a 20mph headwind.

However, just two weeks later, the then government cancelled funding following a lack of interest shown by BR and the high-speed projects failing to reach agreement after more than £5 million in project funding had been spent.

The track was dismantled, as was agreed previously with the landowners. RTV 31 was temporarily moved to an airfield at Cranfield University, near Bedford, where it lay abandoned until 1993, with calls for it to be scrapped to make way for a new road scheme.

Former employees who had worked on the project met at a reunion in Cambridge 20 years after the project was cancelled and were horrified to hear that RTV 31 might be scrapped. They asked for places it could be preserved and saved, but no one was interested as it was a test vehicle and nothing more.

Railworld, founded in 1985 by the Rev Richard Paten in a former power station coal yard, was then approached to provide a home for this Cambridgeshire industrial relic. Richard agreed, and the ex-employees and volunteers from Railworld pooled together £11,000 to fund the move in 1994 and build supports to its new permanent home.

In 2006, RTV 31 was painted by contractors to give it more appeal as 'futuristic transport' at a cost of nearly £4000. RTV 31 was displayed on one of the original concrete track beams, and its size and striking able and red livery made it a landmark for passengers on the nearby Nene Valley Railway and also on the passing East Coast Main Line. However, a structural survey in 2024 found that the beam was life-expired, so the hovertrain had to be lifted off if the vehicle was to survive.

Careful planning

Following several months of contractors building bespoke support cradle/beds to accommodate RTV 31 – which had to be split into halves to facilitate being lifted off the beam – Peterborough firm Crowland Cranes safely lowered it on to the new frames on September 16, pending restoration at Railworld. When the contractors were helping volunteers dismantle the vehicle for lowering, they discovered two seats that had been fastened in – indicating that two engineers probably rode on RTV 31 during its tests.

Structural engineers were employed by the volunteers to inspect the 50-ton 50ft beam after severe rusting of the tensioned reinforcing and cracking of the concrete was noticed. Advice, research, and meticulous studies cost the volunteers another £4600. They advised that the concrete beam on which it stood was in danger of an explosive collapse and had to be removed and broken up, and it has therefore not survived.

The lifting of RTV 31 was covered on Anglia TV News. Meanwhile, local volunteer Drew Silver's Fenland on Film archive had been creating a feature-length documentary, The Rise and Fall of RTV 31, telling the story of the hovertrain, featuring interviews from many of the 140 scientists and



RTV 31 at Railworld Wildlife Haven on October 25, 2022. ROBIN JONES



Newly-built RTV 31 on the test track at Earith in 1973. RAILWORLD

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The seats from Peterborough's main line station which may be reused inside the restored hovertrain. RAILWORLD

engineers that worked on the Cambridgeshire Hovertrain Project.

Railworld discovered that after the project was cancelled, much of the Hovercraft archives were donated to the Hovercraft Museum in Gosport (hovercraft-museum.org/), which had initially also wanted RTV 31 to go there, but it was deemed unsuitable for its collection.

Volunteer Peter Cox, a local historian, offered to visit the Hovercraft Museum to see what it had and he collected artefacts, logs, photographs and rediscovered and previously unseen archive professional quality 35mm footage that made at the time to sell this futuristic technology worldwide, looking at markets in Canada, Australia and the States, as well as the UK. Railworld made a donation to the Hovercraft Museum for these artifacts and models.

Volunteers still have much to do to save this historic piece of transport history. A 'shelter' building to house RTV 31 is needed to tell the story, and Railworld aims to install seats in RTV and show films – including, perhaps most importantly, Drew's documentary. One idea is to repurpose waiting room seats recovered from Peterborough's main line station, which were donated to Railworld when they were replaced 10 years ago and have been stored ever since.

Fenland on Film is looking to digitise all the 35mm films, a very expensive specialist task, and has set up a GoFundMe page to raise money. Railworld Wildlife Haven does not have a special fund for RTV31's restoration, but donations are invited via localgiving.org/charity/railworldwildlifehaven

Lifelong support brings loco to Bressingham – and its owner becomes trust's new chairman

By Robin Jones



WG Bagnall 0-4-0ST No. 2088 of 1919 *Armistice* is the latest addition to the Bressingham museum's operational fleet. ROB ELLIS

LONGSTANDING volunteer, trustee and locomotive owner Rob Ellis has been appointed as chairman of Bressingham Steam Preservation Trust Museum in Norfolk.

A lifelong narrow gauge enthusiast, Rob acquired WG Bagnall 0-4-0ST No. 2088 of 1919 *Armistice* from the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway late last year and brought it to Bressingham, where it underwent a 10-yearly overhaul before joining the venue's operational 2ft gauge fleet. Before then, Rob was part of the group that returned Quarry Hunslet 0-4-0ST No. 316 of 1883 *Gwynedd* to steam, in its later Penrhyn livery, and took it to visit other UK heritage lines.

He has replaced Chris Leah, a former executive of Railtrack and Network Rail, as well as a board member of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, who will remain on the Bressinham board as a museum trustee.

Rob said: "I am both humbled and proud to have been chosen to chair the board of trustees as we look to balancing the current financial and regulatory headwinds against the trust's mission to maintain and display as much of the collection in operating condition as possible.

"As a boy who played with Mamod steam models and accompanied his father to Bressingham as little more than a toddler when he was a volunteer, I have spent most of my life involved with steam engines.

"Both steam and Bressingham are in my blood, and I am passionate about all kinds of steam engines and am looking forward to working with the board to further unlock the potential of this unique and great collection.

"I am extremely pleased that Chris will continue as a trustee. His wisdom, knowledge and experience will be an invaluable guide for me and the other trustees during the transition and beyond.

"The board's challenge over the coming months will be to refresh the museum's vision and mission, to create a forward plan that ensures the cohesiveness of the collection, build on what is already a great visitor experience, and celebrate our ongoing display and preservation of a wide variety of steam engines"

Chris said: "I am absolutely delighted to hand over the chair to Rob. I have enjoyed more than 12 years in the role, but it is time to hand over to someone else.

"Bressingham is moving to a new chapter in its history with a relatively new team, which Rob's experience and knowledge of heritage narrow gauge will ably lead.

"I would like to express my thanks to the staff, volunteers and trustees who have always given so much to Bressingham and keeping it a family affair. I wish Rob every success."

One of a batch of six 0-4-0STs ordered by the Ministry of Munitions, *Armistice* was completed after the end of the First World War and was instead delivered to the Tame and Rea District Drainage Board sewage works at Minworth, Warwickshire. Withdrawn in 1961, it was bought for preservation and renamed *Lady Luxborough*. In 1991, it was moved to Bredgar, reverted to its original name, and extensively rebuilt before it ran again the following year.

East Lancashire volunteers win local radio accolade

THE East Lancashire Railway has won a local radio award for its volunteers.

The Roch Valley Radio Community Hero Awards celebrates of the people, groups, charities and businesses who go the extra mile to support others and strengthen local communities. The railway's commitment and dedication to the communities it serves have resulted in it being given the award

Diesel driver and head of the signalling department Linda Henderson said: "For almost 40 years, the ELR has operated Heritage trains through the heart of the Irwell Valley, initially serving the communities of Bury, Summerseat and Ramsbottom and then expanding to Irwell Vale, Rawtenstall and Heywood. Without volunteers, the ELR and heritage railways throughout the UK would not exist.

"The award recognises our 800-plus volunteers and those in whose footsteps we follow as the custodians of the railway, preserving it for the future volunteers and visitors."



Collecting the radio award were a group of volunteers reflecting several railway departments, including a train driver, the head of the signalling department, the head of the guards department and a representative of the dining train team and station café. ELR

ELR chairman Mike Kelly added: "I would like to thank Roch Radio for recognising the contribution of volunteers and for highlighting the invaluable work carried out every day by volunteers across so many local charities and organisations."

‘First’ visiting tram steals the show at Woody Bay’s gala!

By Robin Jones

THE showstopper at the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway’s September 26/27 autumn gala was a type of traction never before see in North Devon – in the form of *Thomas Telford*, the unique steam tram built by Alan Keef in 1979 for the Telford Development Corporation.

Built for the former Telford Town Tramway and now based at the Telford Steam Railway, which completely rebuilt it before it returned to service last year, its visit was believed to be the first time that it has left Telford in Shropshire since 2000.

Hunslet 4wDH No. 6660 of 1965 *Heddon Hall* assisted with the tram’s braking on the 1-in-50 gradient.

The other traction item making a first-time appearance at Woody Bay was Lister railtruck No. 11410 of 1939, from the Westonzoyland Pumping Station. It spent its working life at a sewage treatment plant in Stoke-on-Trent.

In operation was the home fleet of new-build L&BR Baldwin 2-4-2T 762 *Lyn*, Bagnall 4-4-0T No. 2819 of 1944 *Sir George Newnes*, Kerr Stuart No. 2451 of 1915 *Axe*, Baguley Drewry 0-6-0DM D2393 of 1957 *Pilton*, Hunslet 4wDHs D6652 and D6660 and Hunslet Locomotive Hire Ltd Jenbacher DG25 No. 001 of 1996.





Above: A visualisation of the boiler for the new *Yeo*. 762 CLUB

Left: The Telford steam tram in the unfamiliar surroundings of Exmoor, with Hunslet diesel *Heddon Hall* assisting with the braking.
TONY NICHOLSON/L&BR



Left: *Lyn* heading a demonstration goods train at Woody Bay. On the original railway, a daily goods train was timetabled ‘when required,’ but most services were mixed.
TONY NICHOLSON/L&BR

Right: Visiting Lister railtruck No. 11410 of 1939, which gave rides in the station area.
TONY NICHOLSON/L&BR



Busy weekend

More than 1400 visitors turned up at Woody Bay for the gala, more attending on the Saturday because rain had been forecast for the following day.

The gala included miniature traction engines, a 16mm garden railway, railway-related displays and stalls and children’s games, with the Lynmouth Shanty Crew providing live music on Sunday.

Chelfham station also opened to visitors on both days, offering another glimpse of the former route with working signals and platforms cleared to recreate more of their Southern Railway era appearance, while visitors could explore a signposted section of the old trackbed towards Bratton Bridge. Money raised at Chelfham during the weekend was earmarked for further restoration work at the station.

Meanwhile, the line’s 762 Club has taken another step forward in its Manning Wardle project to recreate L&BR Manning Wardle 2-6-2Ts *Yeo* and *Lyd*.

Boilers on order

An order has been placed with Israel Newton & Sons Ltd for the first components of the boilers for the pair, and the throatplates and the backplates for both boilers are to be pressed as the first parts of the boilers to be made. The aim to have the boiler for *Yeo* completed in 2027 remains on track.

The project has also been supported by the team that designed and built the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway’s own replica of Manning Wardle *Lyd,* completed in 2010. Some of the drawings used to build *Lyd* will be converted to CAD and the patterns for the first of the new *Lyd*’s components have been made available to the 762 club; visit www.762club.com

Tanfield Railway revives forgotten wartime workhorse from Tyneside

A SECOND World War locomotive that helped keep Tyneside’s industry moving for nearly two decades has been recreated at the Tanfield Railway.

Visiting from the Great Central Railway, Hudswell Clarke Austerity 0-6-ST No.1752 of 1943 No. 68067 (picture, News, page 28) took on the identity of sister No. 68029 for the Tanfield’s Tanfield Railway’s Run It gala on October 17/18.

One of nearly 400 simple steam locomotives commissioned to help the enormous logistics effort needed to win the war, No. 68029 was one of 75 bought as War Department surplus by the LNER to become its Class J94. In 1948, BR sent it to work at Tyne Dock. In 1962, it was borrowed by the National Coal Board for five months to work on its Bowes Railway system, which linked collieries in Burnopfield, Marley Hill, Kibblesworth and Wardley with the River Tyne in Jarrow. During its stay, No. 68029 hauled tens of thousands of tons of coal along the famous route.

Based at Springwell Bank Foot on the line, No. 68029 was reunited with other surplus locomotives of the same design bought for use in the coal industry. It left in June 1962 for Gateshead shed, but by autumn 1963 was replaced by diesels and sent to Darlington for scrap.

Tanfield general manager David Watchman said: “We like to throw the spotlight on forgotten parts of the North East’s railway heritage, and recreating No. 68029 seemed like the ideal way. BR found the rugged J94’s were ideal for docks, factories and awkward parts of its network where bigger and more glamorous machines could not reach. The National Coal Board were huge fans of the design.”

At Tanfield, No. 68029 was joined by another veteran of the Bowes line, Barclay 0-4-0ST No.1659 of 1920 Stanley, built initially for the nearby East Tanfield colliery.

Pre-order Issue 352: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Kidderminster canopy appeal nears £500k as contract to build is agreed

THE Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust's Raise The Roof appeal has reached another significant milestone with the funding for the long-awaited canopy at Kidderminster Town station now standing at nearly £500,000 thanks to multiple donations and the addition of remaining funds from a significant legacy.

At the same time, the SVR has signed the all-important contract for the construction of the canopy.

The appeal aims to fund the construction of a GWR-style platform canopy that will transform the appearance of the station while providing much-needed shelter for passengers. As previously reported, part of the structure will be built using authentic salvaged steelwork from the GWR Wolverhampton Low Level station, preserving an important piece of railway heritage.

In a major boost for the project, a contract has been signed with Worcester-based specialist civil engineering company Walsh Construction, which will deliver the project in carefully planned phases designed to fit around the railway's operational requirements.

Arrangements are now being made to place the order for the canopy's steelwork, ensuring preparations are in place ahead of construction starting on site in January.



Sealing the deal for the canopy construction: Severn Valley CEO Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster and Walsh Construction's James Evitt. LESLEY CARR

Phased construction

During the first phase, taking place throughout the railway's winter shutdown period, Walsh Construction will install foundations and drainage, erect the steel framework and resurface the platform. The schedule has been specifically designed to allow the smooth operation of the railway's February half-term services and its popular Boogie Lights experience.

This initial stage of construction is expected to be completed by the end of March. The second phase is planned for November 2027, during the pre-Christmas pause in services, when the roof cladding will be installed. The final phase is scheduled for January 2028 and will complete the fascia boarding and finishing details.

Trust chair Judith Meredith said: "With the construction contract signed and steelwork ordered, this long-held ambition is becoming reality, but there is still work to do, and we are redoubling our fundraising efforts to secure the funds needed to complete the full project."

With construction preparations in hand, the trust is encouraging supporters, businesses and railway enthusiasts to help close the remaining funding gap. To donate, visit svrtrust.org.uk

South Devon branches out into replica signmaking

THE South Devon Railway's workshop is now able to offer replica GWR signs made to order.

Completing its first heritage signage project, the Buckfastleigh workshops produced a collection of traditional signs for display in the main line Castle Cary station in Somerset, which has been transformed by an £835,000 restoration celebrating its 1900s appearance, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 349.

Situated on the Reading to Taunton line, Castle Cary opened on September 1, 1856, and won Small Station of the Year at the National Rail awards in 2007, and the recent refurbishment has seen it returned to GWR colours.

Following a visit to SDR's workshops, discussions began about how skills used to restore and maintain historic railway equipment could play a part in the modern-day Great Western Railway's plans for Castle Cary.

Working from original examples, the SDR team developed designs reflecting that station's 1920s heritage, combining traditional appearances with modern manufacturing techniques. Every sign was referenced against surviving original examples to ensure that the details were reproduced as authentically as possible, and much of the work took place in the SDR's heritage engineering workshops alongside steam locomotives and carriages dating from the same era, bringing together the line's full-time skilled heritage engineers and volunteers.

SDR engineering manager John Moorhouse said: "It is the first time we have undertaken a project of this kind. In doing so, we have developed another specialist heritage skill which we can now offer to other railways, organisations and individuals."

GWR business assurance and property director Joe Graham said: "We've had many positive comments, in particular about the heritage signage at Castle Cary, and we thank South Devon Railway for its brilliant contribution."





Newly-made GWR-style signs at refurbished Castle Cary station. JACK BOSKETT/SDR



Scarborough's Spa Cliff Lift. GREGORY DERYCKÈRE/CREATIVE COMMONS

Scarborough cliff lift stays closed for engineering assessments

SCARBOROUGH'S Spa Cliff Lift has remained closed since August 21 while an assessment of its ageing infrastructure is carried out.

The funicular was closed by North Yorkshire Council following an independent engineering assessment which identified several issues with it.

The lift was opened by the Scarborough South Cliff Tramway Company Limited on July 8, 1875, linking the South Cliff Esplanade to the Scarborough Spa, then the most popular music venue outside London. It became a blueprint for other British funiculars, including a further four built in Scarborough at North Cliff, Queens Parade Cliff, St Nicholas Cliff and the Central Cliff Lift, the other surviving example in the resort.

In 2025, the Spa Cliff Lift celebrated its 150th anniversary with weekend of special community events at Scarborough Spa.

Nearby residents have called for the cliff lift to be reopened as soon as possible while Scarborough celebrates its 400th anniversary as the original seaside resort.

Scarborough Town Council has asked North Yorkshire Council to produce a timeline for the lift's reopening.

North Yorkshire Council leader Carl Les said: "We know how much affection people have for the Scarborough Spa Cliff Lift and the important role it plays in the town's heritage and identity. We are now building a clearer understanding of the work that may be needed and the likely costs involved. We hope to provide more details in the coming weeks before a formal decision is made on any future programme of repairs."

Works of art are instant hits at Kidderminster exhibition

By Geoff Courtney

PAINTINGS by two of the country's leading artists were instant hits in the annual six-week Railart exhibition held in Kidderminster Railway Museum from mid-August to September 27.

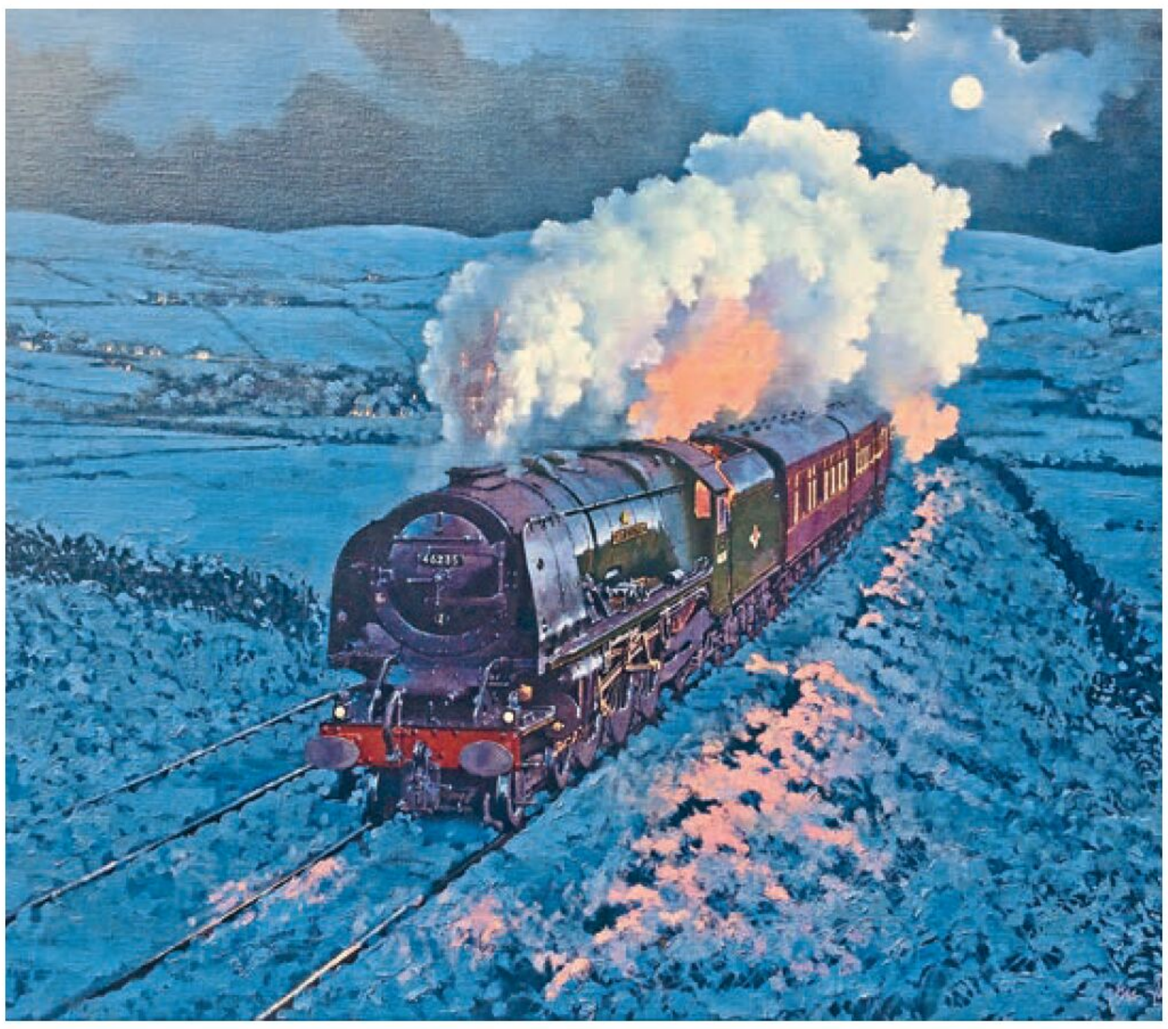
Within hours of the doors of the Guild of Railway Artists' exhibition being opened, a painting by guild fellow Malcolm Root sold – although, as with all the other 57 paintings, it was to remain on display throughout the event – while the work of another fellow, titled Semi at Greenholme, featuring LMS Princess Coronation No. 46235 *City of Birmingham*, also attracted immediate attention.

Malcolm's painting, which was featured in *Heritage Railway* issue 348, was titled The Cunarders and illustrated SR Battle of Britain No. 34081 *92 Squadron* at Southampton Docks with ocean liner *Queen Mary* nearby, while the painting of the LMS Pacific was by guild president John Austin. Such was the interest in these two works of art that Malcolm's won the visitors' Picture of the Year award, followed by John's as runner-up, with third place going to Broad Marsh Nottingham Mid-1960s by Rob Rowland.

Anna Bastin, the guild's exhibition administrator, said that another attraction was painting and sketching demonstrations put on by members, some of whom had travelled from afar to be involved.

"There was a good mixture of interpretations and styles, including some atmospheric monochrome works that were very popular," she said. "Steam, diesel and electric engines all featured, as did trams, and comments in the visitors' book were very complimentary about individual artworks and the exhibition, and 35 of the paintings were sold by the final day.

"All in all, a very satisfying and pleasurable exhibition, and it was rather sad to dismantle it."



Train of thought: The painting by Guild of Railway Artists president John Austin of Princess Coronation No. 46235 *City of Birmingham*. It was runner-up in the guild's Railart 2026 exhibition visitors' poll at Kidderminster Railway Museum.
JOHN AUSTIN

LNER paddle steamer *Waverley* marks 80th anniversary

By Robin Jones

FORMER LNER paddle steamer *Waverley* had a special anniversary sailing on the River Thames on October 2 to mark 80 years since it was launched.

The world's last seagoing paddle steamer made a spectacular passage beneath Tower Bridge shortly after 9.30am before calling at Gravesend and Southend-on-Sea.

It then steamed on to give passengers a close-up view of the Second World War forts Knock John, Red Sands and Shivering Sands. Returning to London, all passengers on deck waved flags and cheered as *Waverley* steamed into the Upper Pool.

Waverley was named and launched at the Pointhouse Yard of A &J Inglis in Glasgow on October 2, 1946, by Lady Matthews, wife of the LNER chairman, who spoke of "the splendour of the Clyde coast scenery" which, she said, "should be viewed from steamers like this."

Waverley entered service on June 16, 1947, working the LNER's Firth of Clyde steamer route from Craigendoran Pier, near Helensburgh, up Loch Long to Lochgoilhead and Arrochar, joining the LNER Clyde paddle steamer fleet of *Lucy Ashton*, *Jeanie Deans* and *Talisman*.

In its first year in service, it wore that company's red, white and black funnel colours.

Nationalisation in 1948 brought the Scottish steamers into the Caledonian Steam Packet Company, a subsidiary of the Railway Executive.

On board for the anniversary sailing was modern-day LNER managing director David Horne.

Waverley returned to Glasgow and the Clyde coast for two final sailings on October 17/18, ending its 80th anniversary season on home waters.

Paul Semple, general manager of Waverley Excursions, said: "*Waverley* reaching its 80th anniversary is a remarkable achievement and one that everyone connected with the ship can be incredibly proud of.

"It was built to serve the Clyde coast and, 80 years later, it continues to give tens of thousands of people the opportunity to experience the joy of travelling by steam.

"From its early beginnings with LNER to its survival as a working paddle steamer after being gifted for £1 to the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society in 1974, *Waverley* has become much more than a ship. It is a living piece of maritime history and a much-loved part of our national heritage."



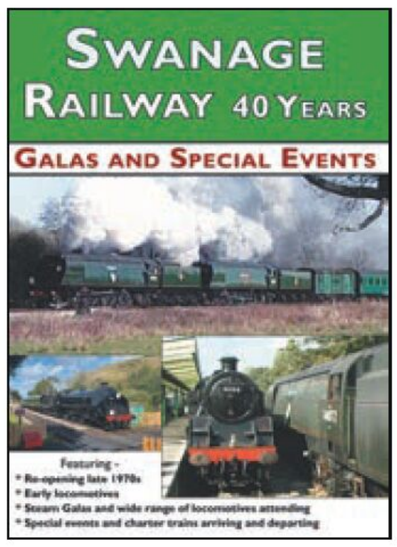
PS *Waverley* passes Tower Bridge on its 80th anniversary sailing on October 2.
WAVERLEY EXCURSIONS

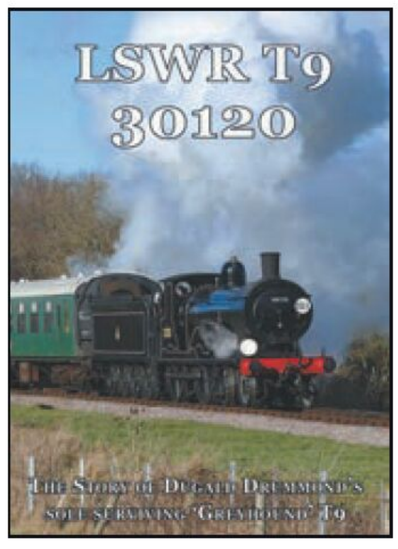
Since 1975, *Waverley* has operated in preservation, carrying more than six million passengers, visiting several areas of the UK, operated on a 'not-for-profit' basis and owned by registered charity Waverley Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. The vessel is British Registered for up to 750 passengers and fully restored to its original 1940s style.

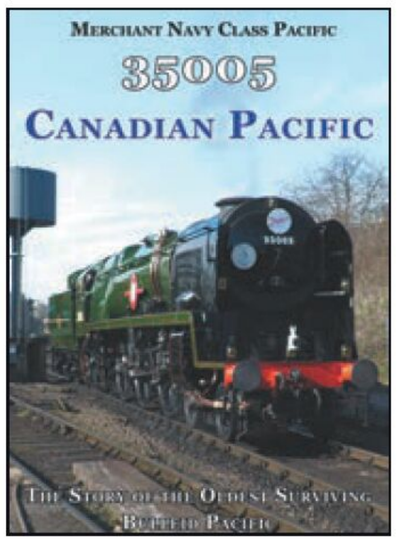
Sir Timothy Laurence, husband of the Princess Royal, Princess Anne, who became president of the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway Trust in 2023, is patron of the paddle steamer.

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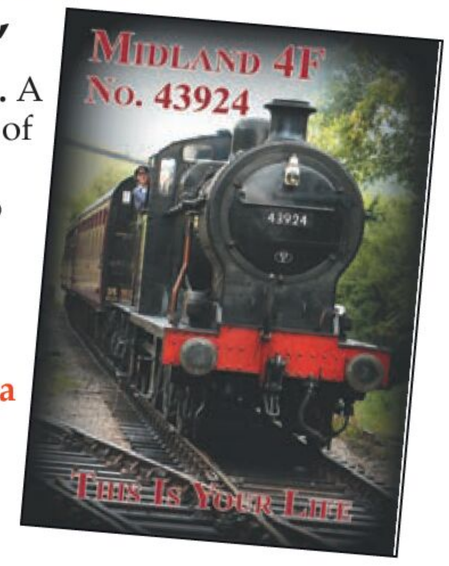


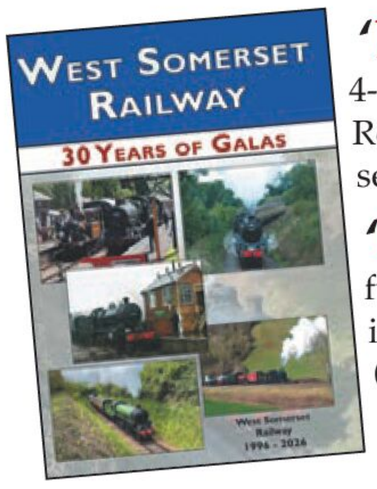
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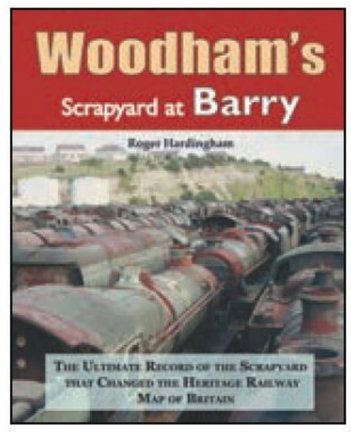
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Full Museum Accreditation bestowed on Darlington's 'flagship' Hopetown

By Robin Jones

ALREADY a multiple award-winning mainstay of the heritage sector, Hopetown Darlington has now received full Museum Accreditation, recognising the quality, care and professionalism behind the town's flagship attraction.

Administered by Arts Council England on behalf of the UK Accreditation Partnership, Museum Accreditation is the nationally recognised benchmark for well-run museums and galleries.

The award followed a detailed assessment process and confirms that the venue, which opened in July 2024, is properly managed and governed to nationally agreed standards, ensuring its collections – comprising more than 30,000 objects and records – are protected and preserved for future generations while remaining accessible and engaging for today's audiences.

Coun Libby McCollom, Darlington Borough Council's cabinet member for local services, said: "Achieving Museum Accreditation is a fantastic achievement for Hopetown Darlington and recognition of the incredible hard work, dedication and professionalism of the entire team. Everyone involved should be immensely proud of what they have accomplished.

"It is a significant moment for the town and further strengthens Darlington's reputation as a destination of national importance for cultural heritage and tourism."

Mike Crawshaw, the council's head of heritage and culture, said: "Museum Accreditation is an important milestone for Hopetown Darlington as we continue to establish the attraction as a must-visit national destination.



It's a winner yet again: The Museum Accreditation certificate for Hopetown Darlington up close. DBC



Leona White Hannant, Hopetown development director (left), Coun Libby McCollom, Darlington Borough Council cabinet member for local services (centre) and Alison Grange, collections engagement manager at Hopetown with the Museum Accreditation certificate. DBC

"The railway heritage collection is an important feature of the visitor experience, telling the story of Darlington's world-changing role in railway history and providing a unique connection to the past.

"We encourage anyone who hasn't yet visited Hopetown to discover everything the site has to offer."

And there's more...

The accreditation follows the attraction winning the prestigious Sandford Award for heritage learning, recognising the excellence of its education programme and commitment to inspiring young people through railway heritage.

Presented by the Heritage Education Trust in partnership with Lincoln Bishop University, the Sandford Award is a nationally respected benchmark for quality in heritage education and recognises the outstanding learning experiences available at Hopetown after a major redevelopment of the historic site.

Assessors praised the attraction's ability to bring Darlington's internationally significant railway story to life through engaging learning programmes, interactive museum experiences, access to collections and the innovative time-travel simulator ride Experiment!

In their official citation, the assessors said: " It is a huge asset to the celebration of railway heritage in Darlington and gives schools a unique opportunity to hear a story of international significance rooted in the town.

"Schools are treated with care and consideration and learners as individuals, with their needs identified and catered for by an excellent learning and access officer."

Their report described the schools programme as offering "brilliant differentiation for all learners" and commended the team's commitment to supporting schools before, during and after their visits to the attraction.

Since opening in July 2024, Hopetown Darlington has welcomed more than 410,000 visitors.

It has also welcomed 375 school visits and 14,520 pupils in that time, becoming established of the region's leading destinations for heritage learning

The official Sandford Award presentation ceremony will take place at Kensington Palace on November 17.

As reported in issue 329, at the Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards 2025, the venue carried off the Railway 200 Special Award created especially at the discretion of the judging panel and the board of the HRA to mark a particular project, scheme or activity that stands out and celebrates 200 years of the modern railway, and also the HRA Interpretation Award, sponsored by *Heritage Railway* magazine.

Help relay half a mile of Lynton & Barnstaple at Snapper Halt

By Robin Jones

A £150,000 project to relay nearly half a mile of the southern section of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has been launched.

A funding appeal for the 800-yard scheme centred around Snapper Halt was launched by the Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust at its autumn meeting in Barnstaple on September 26, which was attended by nearly 100 members.

The cost is estimated to be £206 per linear metre of new railway, replacing that which was lifted by the demolition train in 1936. Each new hardwood sleeper will cost £30, while all the new steel rail required is expected cost £36,000.

The B&YVRT is a registered charity specifically aimed at restoring the southern section of the L&BR from Barnstaple north to Wistlandpound Reservoir, including the preservation and restoration of the trackbed, stations, bridges, viaducts, other infrastructure and rolling stock, as well as educational aims related to the line and the relevant local history.

Chairman Bruce Knights said: "This is an ambitious plan for 2027 but very definitely achievable.

"We have already made preparations for doing this, with essential physical work on the ground carried out by willing volunteers, and we have had positive pre-planning dialogue with the local authority, North Devon Council.



Snapper Halt, which is owned by the Barnstaple and Yeo Valley Railway Trust and through which the original track was lifted 90 years ago. B&YVRT

"The track will be laid to a better standard than the original line and fully capable of handling full-sized recreations of the engines and coaches which ran on it."

Supporters can buy a track screw for £10, a sleeper for £30, a length of rail for £250, or give whatever sum they wish via www.byvrt.org.uk or by sending a cheque made payable to Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust to: The Treasurer, Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust, Windswept, 27 Ruden Way, Epsom Downs KT17 3LL.

Each donation of more than £500, individual or corporate, will be recorded on a benefactors board which will be placed at Snapper Halt.

Pre-order Issue 352: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Take two: Gresley's oldest survivor makes a second comeback in time for Norfolk's 1940s gala weekend

By Owen Hayward



The afternoon sun catches No. 1744 as it approaches Windpump Crossing on September 20, having had repairs completed to enable it to return to service once more. STEVE ALLEN/NNR

SOLE-SURVIVING GNR N2 0-6-2T No. 1744 successfully made its second comeback of the year, having been failed almost as soon as it had re-entered service in July after developing a fractured spring.

As reported in issue 348, No. 1744 returned to revenue-earning service at the North Norfolk Railway on July 17 in the year of its designer's 150th birthday after an overhaul which had lasted eight years and cost an estimated £800,000 to complete. Unfortunately, just days after its first weekend, the discovery of a broken spring on the trailing axle took it out of service. Furthermore, the design of the particular affected component is unique and required a replacement to be made up before the oldest-surviving Gresley-designed locomotive could return to action. In addition to that, an issue with the vacuum brake system also materialised and further delayed matters.

Keith Ashford, the Gresley Society's locomotive manager, oversaw a concentrated week of work on the locomotive in early September in order to complete the repairs and bring No. 1744 back into operation once more. The repaired spring was refitted and checked with No. 1744 over a pit at the Weybourne works.

Apprentices then steamed the locomotive for static brake testing after the vacuum chamber was found to drop as train-pipe vacuum was reduced during a brake application. It was then connected to an electrically driven vacuum test pump, borrowed from the line's carriage and wagon department, so that the chamber and train-pipe systems could be charged and a series of application tests carried out.

Measurements of vacuum brake cylinder piston travel and brake pull-rod travel pointed to the adjustment of the brake rigging, and the clearance between the brake blocks and the tyre treads, as critical to the chamber's behaviour. Yard steaming followed, together with an examination of the small ejector, and further in-steam tests were carried out under the supervision of workshop manager Alex Harper-Bourne.

Successful testing

Once the repairs were completed, No. 1744 was driven to Sheringham and coupled to empty coaching stock, following which three return trips were made with a load of four vehicles, the trials proving that the brakes were performing quite acceptably. The N2 worked the scheduled public passenger service on Thursday, September 17, and it was then available for the line's hugely popular Steam Back To The Forties weekend on September 19/20.

This event saw a line-up of five different steam locomotives in action, including WD 2-10-0 No. 90775, GWR 2-8-0 No. 4277 and Hunslet 0-6-0STs Nos. 22 and 1589. In addition to passenger trains running the full line between Sheringham and Holt, demonstration goods workings shuttled around station limits at Weybourne each day, giving visitors an opportunity to sample what railway life was like back in the heyday of steam.

It took place alongside wider 1940s celebrations in Sheringham, with more than 6200 visitors attending festivities which included live music, vintage vehicles and wartime displays at the railway's three stations.

"The vacuum brake needed careful attention before we could put the engine out with confidence," Keith said. "After static tests with the apprentices, yard steaming and three return trips on empty stock, the brakes were performing quite acceptably. Seeing No. 1744 back on the public service and then working Steam Back To The Forties with the Quad-Art set is exactly what we set out to achieve. Every mile it runs also helps the society repay the NNR for seeing the overhaul through."

Graham Hukins, NNR's general manager, said: "No. 1744 is a star turn on the Poppy Line, and visitors to the 1940s event were delighted to see Sir Nigel Gresley's oldest-surviving locomotive in the thick of a five-engine weekend. The Gresley Society has entrusted it to us for the next 25 years, and it is a pleasure to have it earning its keep once again with the M&GN's Quad-Art set after the recent running repairs."

Stainmore steam makes a return to celebrates Gresley 150

THE Stainmore Railway at Kirkby Stephen East joined in this year's celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sir Nigel Gresley.

After several weeks of operating passenger services with diesel traction because of the summer heatwaves, on August 30, following a significant amount of rain in previous days including thunderstorms, the railway was able to offer steam trips behind Peckett 0-4-0ST No. 2111 *Lytham St Annes*.

Built in 1949, the locomotive was used at Blackpool Gasworks before being preserved at Lytham St Annes. After being sold several times thereafter, it joined the fleet at Kirkby Stephen East in 2018, and it appropriately carried a Gresley 150 headboard supplied by the Gresley Society Trust for this occasion. Also heading service trains and carrying a Gresley 150 headboard was Yorkshire Engine Company 0-6-0DE No. 2670 of 1958 *Stanton No. 50*.

On the day, which also saw the final steam trips of the summer, several visitors enjoyed a free ride on production of a recent Lottery ticket as a thank-you gesture following the award of four Lottery grants to the line for various projects.



Wearing a Gresley 150 headboard, Peckett 0-4-0ST *Lytham St Annes* stands at Kirkby Stephen East with two Gresley coaches on August 30. MIKE THOMPSON



Home-based Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST J94 No. 68067 heads a passenger service on October 3. CLIVE HANLEY



Newstead **takes a turn hauling one of the 'Windcutter' rakes of 16-ton mineral wagons on October 3.** CLIVE HANLEY

Not just for the big boys: little engines do big things for GCR

By Robin Jones

THE Great Central Railway, with its double-track section, has a worldwide reputation for being able to showcase the UK's largest locomotives.

However, during its October 1-4 Little & Large steam gala, the line reinforced its position as an ultimate heritage stage by highlighting a selection of those at the opposite end of the scale, and making their GCR debuts.

The most dramatic contrast of any of the five visiting locomotives with the Loughborough home fleet was Sentinel 4wVBGT No.7372 of 1927 *Ann*, which was supplied new to British Tar Products Limited in Cadishead, Lancashire, and shunted wagons around the site until it retired in 1969. Entering preservation on the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway, it later moved to the East Lancashire Railway and then in December 2024 to its current home, the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway.

During the GCR gala, *Ann* ran some passenger services, top-and-tailing with another guest, crimson lake-liveried Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' 0-6-0ST No. 1529 of 1929 *Newstead,* which is based at the North Norfolk Railway, from Loughborough to Quorn & Woodhouse station. *Ann* also ran shuttles around the station at Loughborough, for which she was solo. GCR staff were told they were the first solo passenger trains the Sentinel had ever operated!



LMS 3F 'Jinty' 0-6-0T No. 16440 works away from Swithland reservoir with the 3.50pm Leicester North to Loughborough on October 1. GRAHAM NUTTALL

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Sentinel 4wVBGT *Ann* on a solo shuttle hauling an inspection saloon around Loughborough Central. GCR



***Newstead* and 'Jinty' No. 16440 double-head a passenger service past Swithland sidings, carrying a Stephenson Locomotive Society headboard.** CLIVE HANLEY



WR 5700 0-6-0PT No. 9681 heads round the curve at Swithland sidings with the first train of the gala, the 10am from Loughborough to Leicester North on October 1. GRAHAM NUTTALL



Doubling up for a six-coach passenger trip are GWR 0-6-0ST No. 813 and WR 0-6-0PT No. 9681. CLIVE HANLEY

Visiting from the Midland Railway-Butterley was 1926-built 3F 'Jinty' No. 16440 in lined LMS maroon livery.

GWR 0-6-0ST No. 813, built by Hudswell Clarke in 1900 for the Port Talbot Railway, is renowned as one of the smallest locomotives operating on its home line, the Severn Valley Railway.

The fifth guest was 1949-built WR pannier No. 9681 from the Dean Forest Railway, which spent the majority of its BR service in South Wales at locations including Tondu, Aberbeeg, Barry and Cardiff, before being withdrawn in July 1965 and reaching Barry scrapyard under its own steam.

During the gala, they ran alongside steam and diesel locomotives and railcar members of the GCR home fleet which were also rostered, boosting the unique variety on offer.

GCR managing director Malcolm Holmes said: "We decided to do something a little different this year, bringing together a collection of smaller locomotives that don't always get the opportunity to take centre stage at the Great Central. It was unusual to see so many small engines working our double-track main line, and they provided a fascinating contrast to the larger locomotives we're more accustomed to seeing.

"Alongside passenger services, we had plenty of goods train activity, including two 'Windcutter' rakes, and I think the variety of operations was a real strength of the event.

"I'm grateful to everyone who visited and supported us, to the owners of our guest locomotives, and particularly to our staff and volunteers who worked so hard to put the event together.

"Of course, we haven't forgotten our bigger engines! We'll be returning to a more traditional mix of locomotives for future galas, and we've already announced the wonderful LSWR T3 No. 563 (see feature, pages 46-49) as our first guest for January's Winter Steam Gala. I'm very much looking forward to seeing it on the Great Central."



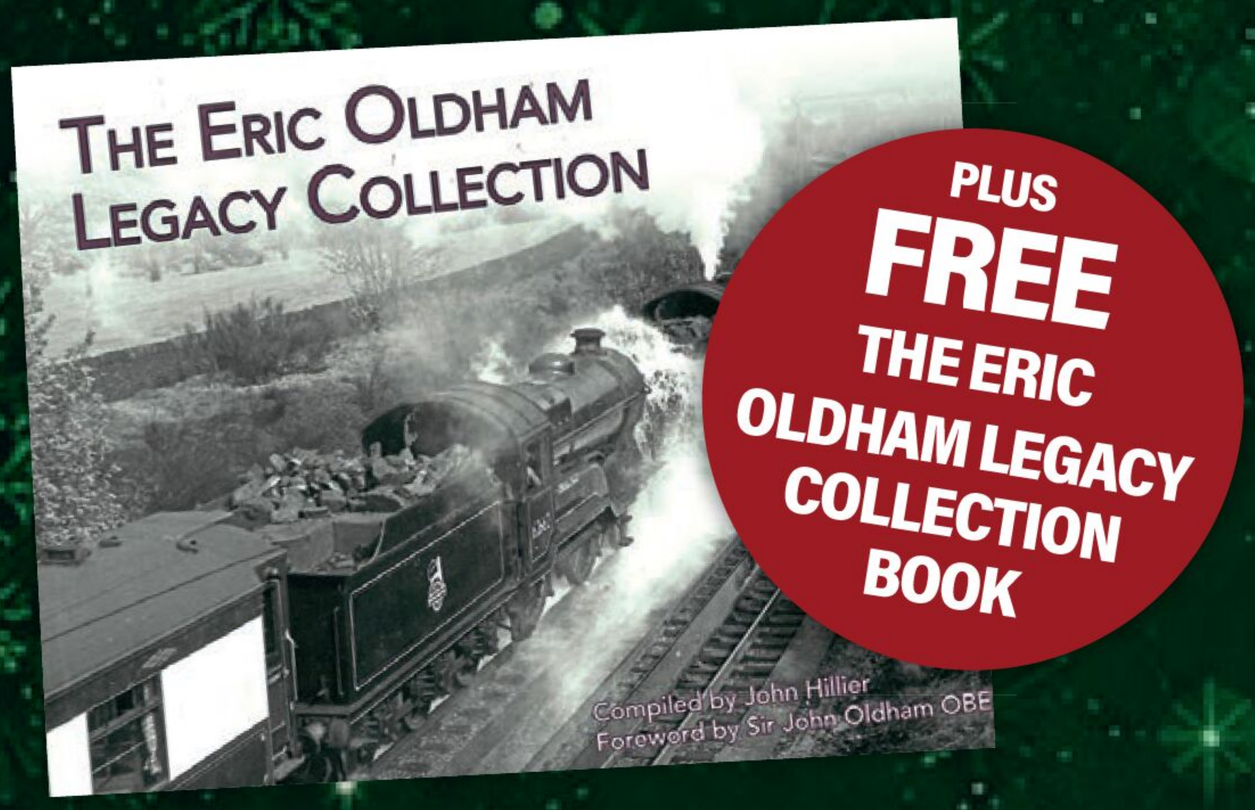
GWR 0-6-0ST No. 813 departs from Loughborough with a passenger service on October 2, passing Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' 0-6-0ST *Newstead* waiting with its train (right). ROBERT FALCONER



Some of the Great Central's big locomotives were not excluded from the event. Here, BR Standard 5MT 4-6-0 No. 73156 heads one of the 'Windcutter' rakes on October 2. ROBERT FALCONER

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New and familiar faces as KESR gears up for RVR link

By Geoff Courtney

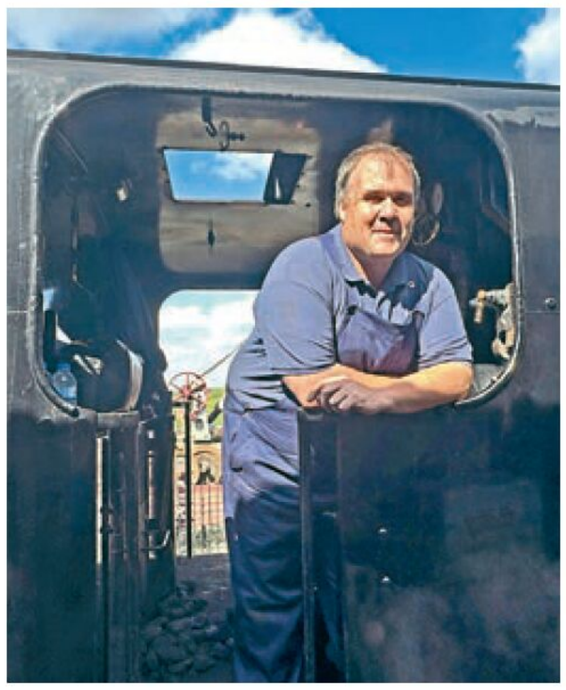
A NEW face and a returnee have become part of the Kent & East Sussex Railway operational team as the Tenterden-based heritage line moves ever closer to its link-up with its neighbour, the Rother Valley Railway.

The newcomer is lifelong railway enthusiast Nick Burgess, who has stepped into the role of operations manager following the retirement of Pete Salmon, a KESR veteran who initially joined as a young volunteer 40 years ago.

Nick has spent his working life in the education sector and is also a volunteer commissioner in the Scouting movement.

Returning to the railway is Liam Head, who has taken up the role of engineering manager after a year away from Tenterden working on the main line network. Prior to his departure, he was a member of the KESR engineering team for almost a decade, having spent a few months volunteering prior to this.

His love of the railway, however, started in childhood due to visits with his grandparents from the family home in nearby Wittersham.



New arrival: Nick Burgess, Kent & East Sussex Railway's newly appointed operations manager, views Tenterden Town station from the footplate of 1944 Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 68032. CAROLINE WARNE



Welcome back: Liam Head feels at home at the KESR Rolvenden shed in the company of 1888-built 0-6-0ST *Hastings* (nearest) and Class A1X 'Terrier' 0-6-0T *Knowle* (formerly BR No. 32678), an even older veteran constructed in 1880. Liam has recently returned to the railway as engineering manager after a year working on the main line network. ALISON MILES

KESR chairman Derrick Bilsby said: "We warmly welcome Nick and Liam to the railway – Nick as a new face and Liam a very familiar one.

"Nick brings a new organisational perspective as the operation of our line becomes more complex and Liam now has valuable main line experience. Together, I believe they will make a strong team as we gear up for the opening to Robertsbridge in 2028."

The link to the Rother Valley Railway will be operated by the KESR and turn the line into a 14-mile route from Tenterden Town with access to the national network.

Facilities at Robertsbridge, much of which have already been built, as previously reported, include a five-coach platform, engine and carriage sheds, and a turntable.

Even more magic at Severn Valley this Christmas!

By Robin Jones

THE Severn Valley Railway has added an extra recipe for the upcoming Christmas season.

The mainstay of its packed festive programme will be Santa's Steam Specials, which will run from Kidderminster Town to Arley between 10am and 4.30pm between November 28 and Christmas Eve, taking passengers on a new interactive musical adventure created especially for the SVR.

The Recipe for Christmas takes families into Santa's kitchen, where Mrs Claus and elves Holy and Jangle are preparing the big man's pre-flight treat, but an intervention by the egotistical Chef Crumble causes culinary chaos. With the clock ticking, the audience is called upon to become Santa's helpers, joining in with songs, laughter and festive surprises to help save Christmas.

Written and directed by award-winning West End director, choreographer and writer Nick Winston, with original music by Jack McManus, the show culminates in an appearance from Santa himself. Each child also receives a special gift.

Christopher Brookes, artistic director of Wise Owl Theatre, said: "We wanted to create a show where families aren't simply watching the story but actually become part of it."

Another magical adventure waiting at the opposite end of the line is the Elf Express, departing from Bridgnorth on selected dates from November to 28 Christmas Eve.

Passengers step aboard their own compartment for an immersive journey featuring Father Christmas and a cast of colourful North Pole characters, including Gingersnap the Gingerbread Man, Chef Cinnamon Crumble, Joe Robin and Poppy the Post Elf, Chris-Mouse and Trixie the Trickster Elf, Mrs Claus and Cracker the Elf.

Developed in partnership with Wise Owl Theatre, the experience combines live performance, interactive storytelling and puppetry, with a special visit from Santa and a gift for every child.

The traditional Carol Trains will run in the dark on December 4, 5, 11, 12, 18 and 19 from Kidderminster to The Engine House at Highley with musicians and choirs from Shropshire and Worcestershire, plus a complimentary glass of mulled wine and mince pie for every passenger. Festive Afternoon Tea trains return on December 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 17, running from Kidderminster to Highley and back.



BR Standard 4MT 2-6-0 No. 75069 heads the Santa Steam Special on November 11, 2025. JACK BOSKETT MEDIA/SVR

SVR head of commercial and customer service Victoria Evans said: "This year, we have an incredible range of experiences to share." Bookings are now open at svr.co.uk

➜ As highlighted in our last issue, *Heritage Railway* is offering readers the chance to win tickets for six people on Santa's Steam Special and travel to see The Recipe for Christmas.

We have three compartments reserved to welcome six people on the return trips from Kidderminster over the weekend of November 28/29 only.

To enter our special prize draw, visit www.therailwayhub.co.uk/73808/christmas-competition/ or scan the QR code here on your mobile. Entries must be with us by 5pm on Thursday, November 12. For full terms and conditions, visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/terms and conditions

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Eight locos line up for 'big' little Epping gala

By Owen Hayward

LITTLE locomotives are continuing their current strong grasp of gala events. The Epping Ongar Railway's November 7/8 Small Engines weekend is set to be its biggest gala line-up ever, with no less than eight locomotives due to appear.

A branch line with origins in the Great Eastern Railway, the booking of 'Coffee Pot' 0-4-0ST No. 299 will see this particular diminutive locomotive hauling trains on a GER route for the first time in its 152-year history. Built in 1874, it was used as a carriage brake tester and depot shunter at Stratford Works before ending up at Chepstow Docks in 1917. Although it has returned to GER territory twice since returning to steam last year, the first occasion was only static outside Liverpool Street station. The second occasion was, as reported last issue, for its visit to the Mangapps Farm Railway at Burnham-on-Crouch which, while situated in the GER region, is a museum line built during the heritage era and therefore never operated by No. 229's original owning company.

While at Mangapps, No. 229 ran alongside Bagnall 0-6-0PT No. 2613 of 1940 *Brookfield*, which was designed with metre gauge in mind for a coal mine in Turkey, then commandeered as part of the war effort, and it remained in Britain, modified to run on standard gauge. It too spent time working for the Admiralty, in this instance at the California Works at Stoke-on-Trent. *Brookfield* has yet to venture away from Mangapps despite having arrived there in the mid-1990s, but that is set to change as it will be heading over to the EOR for the gala.



Above: Bagnall No. 2613 *Brookfield* will leave Mangapps Farm for the first time in 30 years to appear at the Epping Ongar Railway's Small Engines Gala. TONY GOULDING/EOR



Right: 'Coffee Pot' No. 229's visit to the EOR in November will see it pull trains on a former GER route for the first time ever. OWEN HAYWARD

Double Hunslets

Also booked are Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' 0-6-0ST No. 1589 *Newstead*, which will be stopping over on its way out from the North Norfolk to the Avon Valley Railway, where it will spend November and December working festive services, and Barclay-built Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 2183 of 1943, which currently carries its Wemyss Private Railway identity of No. 15 *Earl David*, the latter appearing thanks to Andrew Goodman.



Right: Rolls-Royce Sentinel DL82 is also set to pull its first-ever passenger trains at the Epping Ongar Railway's upcoming Small Engines Gala. MICHAEL DREW/EOR

The quad of visiting steam locomotives will join resident Hawthorn Leslie 0-6-0ST No. 3437 of 1949 *Isabel*, recently returned to steam after undergoing a boiler retube in the EOR's North Weald workshops.

Diesel traction will also run, with the gala set to be the first-ever public outing for Rolls-Royce Sentinel 0-6-0DM DL82, one of three identical locomotives built for use by London Transport at its Neasden and Lillie Bridge depots to replace GWR pannier tanks in 1971. After being retired there, they were sold on to work at the Corby iron ore mines in Northamptonshire, from where DL82 was passed into private ownership and kept at a site near Hardingham, in Norfolk.

In 2024, it was sold to an EOR supporter and arrived at North Weald, where it has been undergoing work to bring it back into service, including the replacement of its dumb buffers and a repaint into its LT colours. Having never yet pulled a public passenger-carrying service, it will no doubt prove highly attractive to diesel enthusiasts seeking rare and unusual locomotive haulage.

Completing the line-up are resident shunting locomotives Class 03 D2170 and 08 No. 08114, which will primarily be kept on standby but may make some appearances on trains.

Busy operations

While *Earl David* and *Newstead* will take charge of the services between North Weald and Ongar, the remaining locomotives will alternate on shuttles towards Epping Forest and the EOR's boundary with the London Underground Central Line, with the timetable being planned to allow ample opportunity to travel behind all these locomotives. For further information, see www.eorailway.co.uk

Rolling stock manager Tony Goulding said: "The opportunity to bring the 'Coffee Pot' back to a genuine GER line for the first time was something we couldn't miss, and I have to thank Bill Parker for facilitating that; likewise, the other locomotive owners who have enabled this gala to take place. It will be something really different, and it is certainly new ground for us.

"With not much else happening at that time of year, we hope people will join us to celebrate the might and variety that the smaller locomotives of the railway world have to offer."

First trains on Somerset Levels line's new extension

THE Westonzoyland Light Railway, at the Pumping Station Museum, near Bridgwater, ran the first public trains on its new extenion and station Hoopers Elm Halt, at the Hoopers Lane site entrance, during its annual August Bank Holiday Monday gala.

This year's visiting locomotive was Kerr Stuart 0-4-0ST 'Wren' No. 4256 of 1956 *Peter Pan,* from the Leighton Buzzard Railway, courtesy of Graham Morris, which was making its third visit to the 2ft gauge line following its appearances at galas in 2022 and 2024.

Joining the visitor were the WZLR's active fleet of engines, including Lister railtruck No. 34758 of 1949, Motor Rail Simplex No. 40S310 of 1968 *Ken* and Clayton battery locomotive No. B0402 of 1974, which was purchased straight from industry in 2023. On display were Lister railtrucks Nos. 6299 of 1935 and No. 42319 of 1968, as well as Ruston and Hornsby 20DL No. 235711 of 1945. The event was once again hailed a success and welcomed many visitors including railway enthusiasts and local residents.



Right: No. 4256 *Peter Pan* departs the new Hoopers Elm Halt. JOSH BRINSFORD

Childhood helper from Down Under reunites with *Pendennis*!

By Robin Jones

A WOMAN who earned pocket money as a child helping to maintain GWR 4-6-0 No. 4079 *Pendennis Castle* during its years in Australia was reunited with the repatriated locomotive during a visit to England from Perth.

Roslyn King visited Didcot Railway Centre on September 16 to renew her acquaintance with No. 4079. As a child, she polished the 18 brass nuts on the tender axle boxes for ten dollars.

Roslyn's grandfather, Edwin King, and father Stephen King emigrated to Australia in the mid-1960s as 'ten pound Poms.'

In 1977, *Pendennis Castle* had been sold to Hamersley Iron, one of the largest iron ore producers in western Austrasia, by the late Sir William McAlpine, who owned the 4-6-0 and LNER A3 Pacific No. 4472 *Flying Scotsman* at the time.

The firm asked him if he would sell it *Flying Scotsman* to run on its 240-mile ore-carrying Hamersley Railway. Sir William declined, offering *Pendennis Castle* instead.

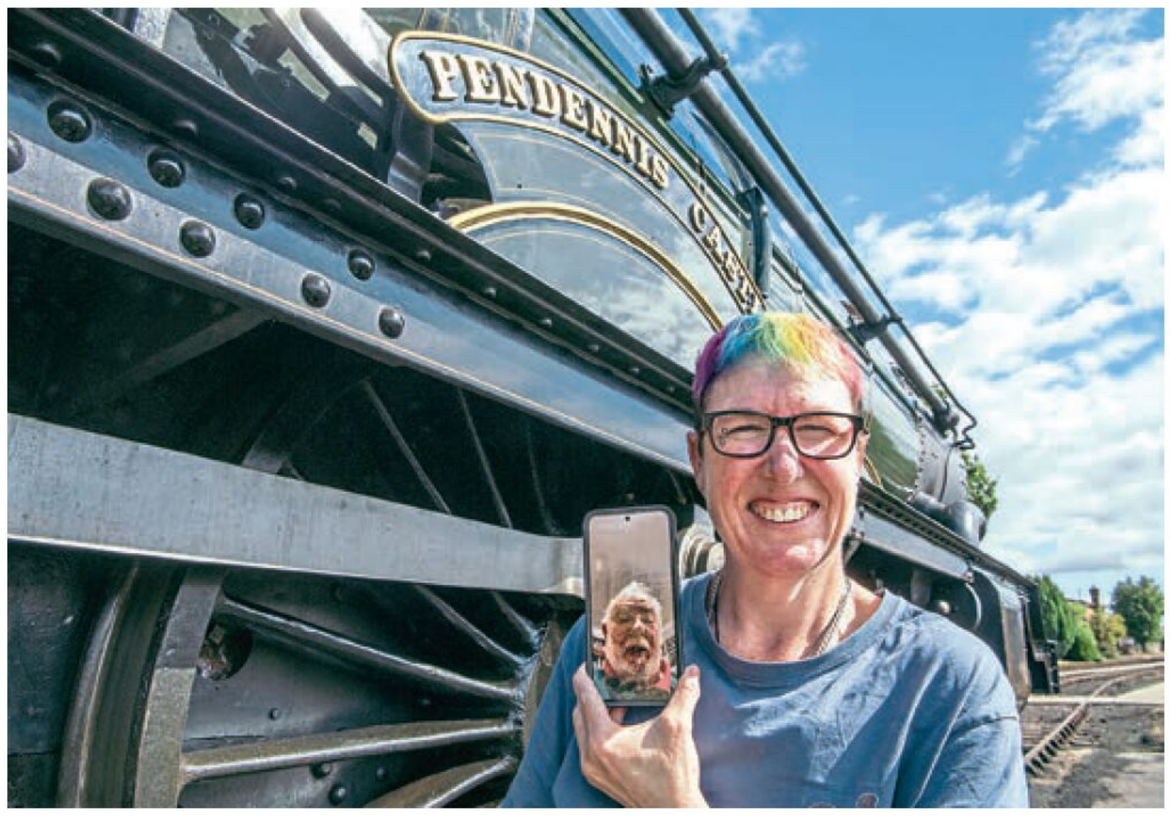
No. 4079 left Avonmouth on May 29, 1977, on board the *Mishref,* bound for Sydney.

Edwin and Stephen King subsequently joined the Pilbara Railway Historical Society that looked after *Pendennis Castle* for Hamersley Iron, and both were passed as steam drivers on the locomotive.

Roslyn recalled that *Pendennis Castle* would take its passenger cars to remote towns such as Paraburdoo and Tom Price to pick up passengers for Christmas shopping in Karratha.

In 1994, *Pendennis Castle* required a boiler overhaul, and new electronic signalling on the Hamersley Railway meant that it would need to be towed behind a diesel in future operations.

As a result it was placed into storage and then offered to Didcot Railway Centre, provided that it could raise finance for the journey home. As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 16, No. 4079 finally arrived back in England on July 8, 2000, aboard the roll-on roll-off cargo ship *Toba*, completing a circumnavigation of the globe during the voyage. No. 4079 was unloaded at Portbury Dock, opposite Avonmouth, from where it departed 23 years earlier. Following overhaul at Didcot, it returned to steam in 2022.



Alongside *Pendennis Castle* at Didcot on September 16, Roslyn holds her mobile telephone with her father on the screen through video link. He had stayed up late for the call as it was midnight in Australia. FRANK DUMBLETON

New home approved for Carnforth's former Selside signalbox

By Owen Hayward

THE relocation of a Grade-II listed signalbox that once controlled movements around Selside, in Cumbria, has been given the green light to move from its current position at the former Steamtown site in Carnforth to a private farm in Clapham, Keasden, North Yorkshire, where it is hoped that part of the structure can be rebuilt to ensure its survival.

The Midland Railway 'box was built from timber and Welsh slate in 1907 on part of the Settle to Carlisle line, replacing an earlier 'box of 1876 and forming an intermediate block post between signalboxes at Horton-in-Ribblesdale and Blea Moor. It did not control a junction or sidings, acting only as a block post to allow a higher density of traffic on the line. Consequently, the 'box was very small in size.

Selside 'box closed on November 30, 1975, and a year later was moved and re-erected at Carnforth Steamtown to form part of the visitor attraction. It remained functional there until the site, now the base of West Coast Railways, was closed to the public in the 1990s and has gradually decayed despite its historic listing status. Earlier this year, it was pictured having partially collapsed after sustaining further damage as a result of January's Storm Goretti, leaving doubts as to its future.

In February, an application was submitted to Lancaster City Council by Clapham resident Alan Price to remove the 'box's listed status to enable it to be removed from Carnforth and rebuilt at his farm. In the supporting documents, he said: "I am in a position to offer the 'box a new home on my farm at Clapham, only because of a connection I have with a friend who works for West Coast Railways.

"The bottom half of the box has disintegrated, but the upper structure is still saveable. The lever frame is intact, as is the rear upper wall and door end. I propose to use the same skilled joiners from Settle who have carried out similar work on Settle station signalbox.

"I have extensive knowledge of how Midland Railway signalboxes are built and how they should be. When the upper structure has been restored, it can be lifted onto a new, suitable base."

The application was given approval on September 2, with accompanying notes stating that the proposal would "result in the signalbox being removed from its current railway setting and relocated to a farm, causing a high-level of harm to the significance of the building." However, it acknowledged that "it is clear that if left in its current state, the building would continue to deteriorate to a point where none of the signalbox is salvageable and would likely result in the total loss of the heritage asset. The applicant, who will be the new owner of the signalbox, has shown a strong interest in rescuing and repairing the signalbox, which would help facilitate the restoration and ongoing conservation of the listed building. It is considered that these are exceptional circumstances and that this remains the best option of securing the long-term future of the listed building. This is a public benefit which would outweigh the level of harm that has been identified and therefore would be compliant with local and national polices."

The 'box has since departed Carnforth for its new home.



Selside signalbox in 2008, before its rapid decay. ANDREW NAYLOR



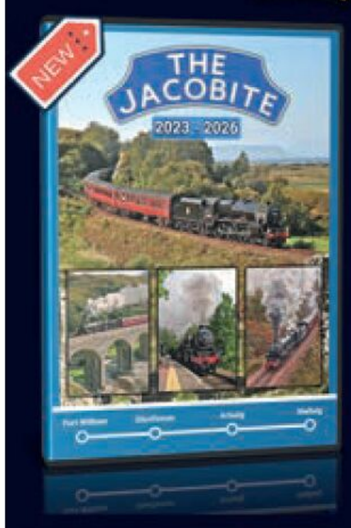
The signalbox toppled at Carnforth by Storm Goretti. ALAN PRICE/LCC

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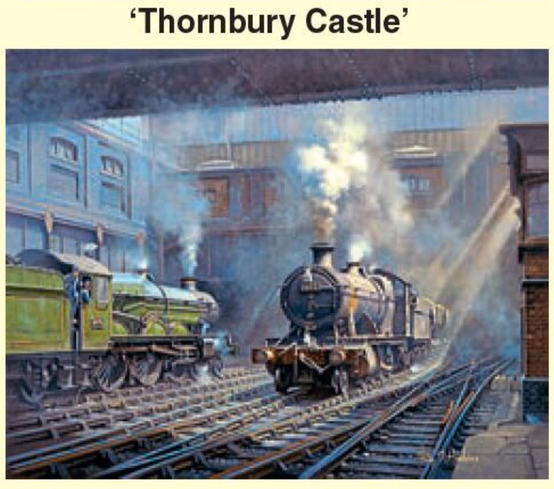
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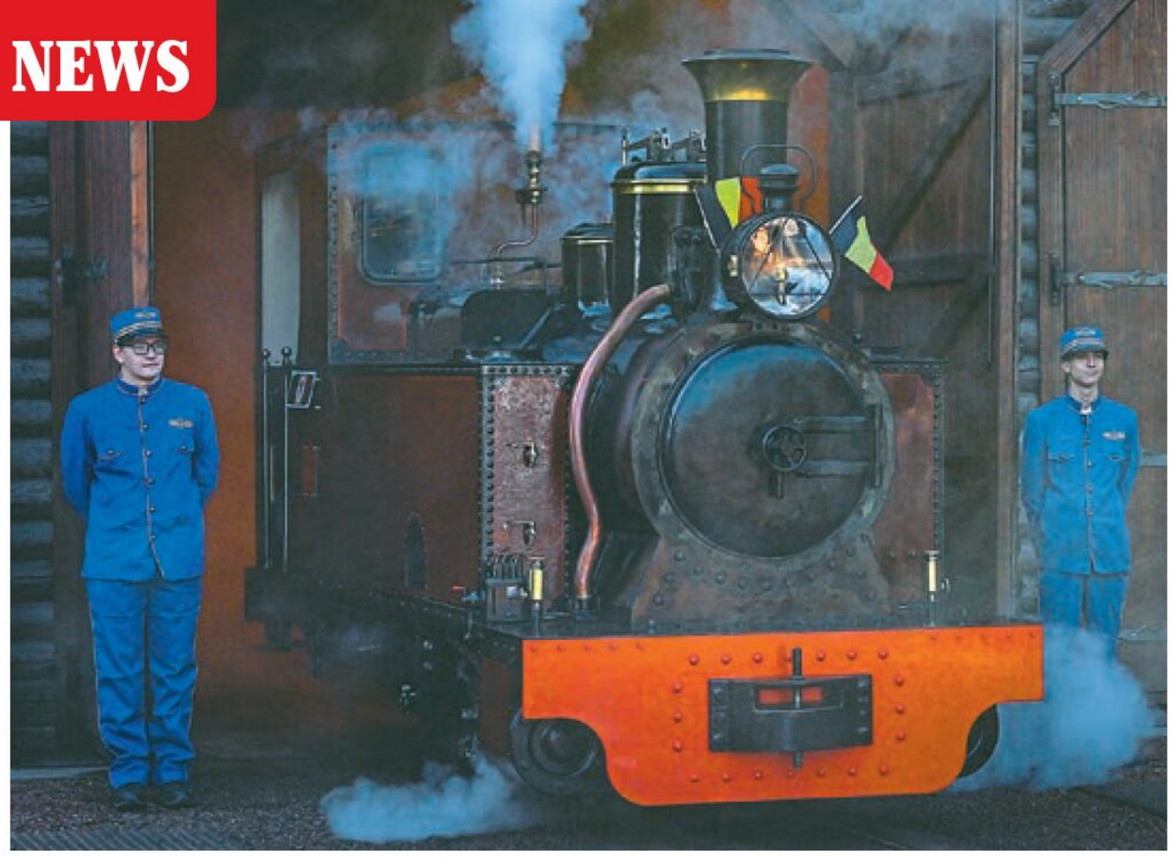
'Snow Hill – Sunlight & Steam'

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Full circle for the Couilett 0-6-0T: After working for six decades in Spain, 53 years in Peter Rampton's barns in Surrey, and spending four years being restored in the Czech Republic, it was unveiled on September 9 to begin a new life running just a few miles from where it was built in Belgium 126 years ago. PAIRI DAIZA



Resplendent in its new livery, the Couillett 0-6-0T now carries the name of *Reine Elisabeth*, a former queen of Belgium. PAIRI DAIZA

Collection X loco steams once more near Belgian birthplace

By Robin Jones

ONE of the locomotives from the late Peter Rampton's legendary Collection X has been returned to steam at its new home in Belgium, a few miles from where it was built.

Couillet 0-6-0T No. 1318 of 1900 *Olleros No. 3* was one of a trio of the builder's locomotives owned by the 600mm gauge Hulleras de Sabero coal mine railway in northern Spain.

The line closed in 1968, and Peter bought all eight of its locomotives on March 20 that year. No. 1209 of 1898 *Sahelices No. 2* was the first to arrive at Peter's farm in Surrey on October 20, 1968; in the decades that followed, he amassed a collection of about 50 locomotive and items of rolling stock.

Peter died on July 3, 2019, and his collection was moved to the Vale of Rheidol Railway in Aberystwyth – the purchase of which from BR was completed on March 31, 1989, by him and Tony Hills, who had founded the Brecon Mountain Railway. Peter became chairman of the VoRR and went on to acquire many more locomotives from around the world.

With his collection at the VoRR, it was decided to sell *Olleras No. 3*, which was similar to the two other Couillets in the Pairi Daiza Steam Railway Collection based at the privately-owned 75-acre Pairi Daiza and Gardens in Brugelette, Hainaut. It was displayed there until December 2022, after which it was taken to the Museum of Old Machines and Technologies in the Czech Republic for a restoration which has taken nearly four years.

New name

In September, the locomotive rejoined the five other heritage locomtives at the Pairi Daiza line. On September 9, it was renamed *Reine Elisabeth* in tribute to Queen Elisabeth of Belgium (1876-1965), who was closely associated with the country's artistic, scientific and cultural life.

In 1923, the queen boarded the Belgian Royal Train on a journey to Egypt, travelling by rail to Genoa before continuing to Alexandria to become one of the first prominent visitors to the recently discovered tomb of Tutankhamun.

Her name is now carried by a locomotive that tells another distinctly Belgian transport story: Belgium inaugurated the first public railway in continental Europe and went on to become one of the world's leading locomotive-building nations.

Jason Van Landschoot, who is in charge of Pairi Daiza's railway collection, said: "A train journey at Pairi Daiza is much more than just another way to discover the animals and their habitats.

"When the locomotive sets off, with the sound of steam and machinery, you are also immersed in the past.

"This railway heritage is part of our history. Preserving it is important; bringing it to life and giving visitors the chance to experience it is even better."

Llyr Ap Iolo, the VoRR's CEO and Chief Engineer, said: "We are thrilled to see another part of Peter Rampton's vision – that the historic vehicles he saved from the 1960s onwards should have a purpose – be realised through the restoration of this locomotive to working order. The Pairi Daiza line is the perfect new home for this characterful little machine.

"We have more than 30 locomotives here at the VoRR, but even more have either been part of our collection, visited, or been overhauled here. We consider all of them to be part of our VoRR family, so we extend our congratulations to the Pairi Daiza team, and we look forward to maintaining our international association and learning of this engine's new life from afar."

Back in service

The locomotive was resteamed in public for the first time on the zoo's railway on September 12/13, and following trials, it was expected to enter regular public service there in the coming weeks.

The rest of the Sabero Railway locomotives, Henschels Nos. 101 and 102 of 1918, the other two Couillets, No. 1 of 1895 and No. 2 of 1898, plus the parts of No. 6, and the recently cosmetically improved No. 7 (Borsig 0-6-2T Sotillos of 1902) are all at the VoRR's secure storage facility. One Couillet, the Borsig and the Sabero Railway's presidential saloon carriage are on public display in the museum at Aberystwyth station.

➜ Another Sabero Railway locomotive, Henschel 0-4-0T No. 16045 of 1918 No.103, which was sold at the same time as the Couillet, has just been test-steamed for the first time at the private Little Braxted Light Railway, near Witham, Essex.

Tanfield strikes gold at Northumbria in Bloom awards

THE Tanfield Railway has carried off a Gold Award after being named Best in Class for the Bus, Metro, and Railway Stations category at the annual Northumbria in Bloom awards ceremony, held on September 16 at The Fed events space in Gateshead.

Recognising excellence across horticulture, environmental responsibility and community participation, the awards showcase the very best floral displays and environmental stewardship in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham.

Judges praised the world's oldest railway for its stand-out volunteer community spirit, its active collaboration with local schools and community organisations, and its skill in blending vibrant floral displays with the railway's authentic 1920-1950 heritage theme.

The top regional accolade came after the line won both Railway of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year in the Heritage Railway Association awards, as reported in issue 343.

Tanfield Railway Trust secretary Angela Pickering said: "We were over the moon to win Gold and even more so Best in Class. There is so much work that goes into maintaining the railway, and this is a true credit to everyone involved.

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Great Central Reunification next stage out for tender

By Robin Jones

THE Great Central Railway has invited tenders for the next phase of the multi-million pound Reunification project, designed to link it to sister line the GCR (Nottingham) to create an 18-mile living transport museum and one of the finest heritage lines in Europe.

The Factory Flyover phase at Loughborough will see 66 yards of new railway built at a cost of about £3.5 million, with the tender-winning contractor expected to be appointed before Christmas and work expected to begin on site in early 2027.

The phase includes an elevated concrete viaduct above a factory car park and a new bridge across the Railway Terrace road, and both should be in place before the end of the year.

"This is a hugely significant moment for us," said GCR general manager Malcolm Holmes. "We are actually building two sections of the Reunification project at the same time.

"The new bridge and viaduct will add to the three pieces of Reunification already built, taking our total investment in the project so far to £8.5m, the vast majority being contributed by supporters around the world. It's their passion which has helped us get this far."

The Reunification project will see nearly 550 yards of lost railway rebuilt in total. The track between the two heritage lines was demolished in the 1970s, but already, a new bridge has been built over the Midland Main Line at Loughborough,



A visualisation of the planned Railway Terrace bridge looking south. GCR

a canal bridge has been refurbished and a road bridge completely replaced. Ultimately, the rebuilt railway will be supplemented by vintage bus links, creating a major attraction for the East Midlands area, which stretches across Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

Bringing hundreds of thousands of visitors to the East Midlands and employing about 150 people, it could contribute a quarter of a billion pounds to the local economy over 30 years.

Andy Fillingham, of the GCR(N), said: "Earlier this year we hosted *Flying Scotsman* and *Tornado* together and we could see the appetite everyone has for completing the link and running trains along 18 miles.

"This project was once described as impossible, and while there is much more to do, these next two stages, being built at the same time, will prove we are as committed as ever to finishing it!"

After the Factory Flyover stages are completed, a further £18m is required to complete the route, rebuild locomotive sheds and prepare for the link-up.

➜ **Donations to the project are welcome at www.gcrailway.co.uk/unify**

Stanford Viaduct restoration gets under way

WORK on restoring the Great Central Railway (Nottingham)'s landmark 11-arch Stanford Viaduct has begun.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 346, the East Midlands Transport Heritage Trust's Forward Fund appeal was launched to finance repair work on the viaduct across the River Soar. Following the success of the appeal, that work has now been able to commence. A week of activity will see some brickwork rebuilt or repaired using recovered bricks and some new blue bricks. Coping stones pushed off by vandals years ago will be recovered and refitted.

Work will then begin on removing spray-painted graffiti from the structure, along with invasive plants.

Lord-Lieutenant and deputy meet Severn Valley volunteers

THE Severn Valley Railway was visited in September by the Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Beatrice Grant, along with her deputy, Charles Moyle, and Kidderminster Mayor Coun Shazu Miah to learn about its volunteers, community role and ambitious future plans.

Thee group met a range of SVR volunteers and heard first-hand about the opportunities available, from operational roles such as driving, guarding and signalling to customer-facing roles which help visitors make the most of their experience. They also heard about the profound personal benefits that volunteering can bring, with the railway providing friendship and purpose for many.

"It is a privilege to visit this special place and to see how the SVR and its passionate group of volunteers are working together to make a real difference to this area of the Midlands," said Mrs Grant.

"The strength and enthusiasm of all those who make this one of the UK's premier heritage railways is clear to see.

"It shines a brilliant light on how volunteering can bring people together, working together, a sense of community, and where friendships can be forged."

SVR head of commercial and customer service Victoria Evans said: "Our volunteers are, quite simply, the lifeblood of the railway. Without them, the SVR could not operate, and their contribution goes far beyond the hours they give us."

The visit also provided an opportunity to showcase the SVR's plans for Kidderminster Town station, including the SVR Charitable Trust's ambitious Raise The Roof campaign, which aims to raise £1 million to build a heritage canopy over the double platform, and develop the terminus as a welcoming hub and social space for the community, hosting events and attracting a wider and more diverse audience.

The visit included a tour of the restored Stove R, the LMS six-wheel passenger brake No. 2886 which dates from 1932 and was fitted with stoves during the 1940s.



The Severn Valley's Mike Hulme, Victoria Evans, Amy Baker, Terrie Walton, Russell Dunn and Robert May meet Lord-Lieutenant Beatrice Grant, Coun Shazu Miah and Deputy Lord-Lieutenant Charles Moyle. KEITH WILKINSON/SVR

"Countless hours go into making our stations look great, and we owe a special thanks to all of the groups who have helped us, in particular Stanley Town Council, which has supported us for a number of years."

TR volunteer gardener Geoff Sharp said: "I'm still beaming now. We have won Silver Gilt for the last few years, and to get Gold after so much hard work is the cherry on the top. We are not going to rest on our laurels, though – we have to maintain our winning streak for next year."

➜ The railway continues to seek additional volunteers to help run its services as well as maintain its award-winning gardens: for details, visit https://tanfield-railway.co.uk/volunteer/



Tanfield Railway gardening volunteers with the Gold and Best in Class Awards in front of Robert Stephenson 0-6-0T No. 2730 of 1891 No. 3 *Twizell* at Andrews House station. TR



LNWR 0-6-2T Coal Tank No. 1054 double-heads with fellow visitor GWR 2-6-2T No. 4110. LAURA STANDERWICK



GWR 4-6-0 No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* calls at Watchet station during the 1940s weekend. MIKE LANNING

Triple September success for West Somerset steam events

By Robin Jones

THE opening of the Minehead Railway boosted that town's status as a growing resort, and the triple success of three successive September weekends on the West Somerset Railway after the school summer holiday peak period underlined the importance of Britain's longest standard gauge heritage line as a mainstay of the tourist economy as it celebrates its 50th anniversary year.

The annual 1940s Weekend on September 12/13 saw services take visitors to special offerings at the stations along the route. Teams of station volunteers again made a major effort to stage appropriate displays, and there was some period entertainment on offer, as the large area under the station canopy at Minehead once again hosted a Saturday evening dance.

On Saturday, September 19, for the second time this year, the West Somerset welcomed three special main line excursions, the first being another visit by the 'Belmond Britannic Explorer.' The luxury train left London Victoria on the Friday afternoon and was stabled overnight on the WSR before continuing to Penzance on Saturday morning.

The second was another Railway Touring Company excursion from Paddington which had been planned to be steam worked as far as Bishops Lydeard but was top-and-tailed by Class 47s Nos. 47237 and 47828, operated by West Coast Railways.

Scotsman returns

The third came from Bristol Temple Meads. Organised by Derbyshire-based Fox & Edwards, it was headed by Gresley A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* and was a sell-out.

The world's most famous steam locomotive proved its appeal yet again – by not only bringing its full train into Minehead, but also by attracting many people to the station and lineside to see it pass by.

The locomotive and its tender are too large to turn on the Minehead turntable, so its train departed with the A3 travelling tender-first at the rear and headed by Class 37 No. 37240 as far as the turning triangle at Norton Fitzwarren. Its use allowed the A3 to head the special back to Bristol.

Alongside these trains, the WSR operated its own services throughout



Visiting Ivatt 2-6-2T No. 41313 heads a passenger service at Nornvis Bridge on September 27. DON BISHOP

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WR 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor* recreates the 'Cambrian Coast Express' as it heads into Stogumber station on September 26. LAURA STANDERWICK



Back on the branch for as third time in 64 years: GWR large prairie No. 4110 at Bishops Lydeard on September 25. LAURA STANDERWICK



Coal Tank No. 1054 and West Somerset Railway mogul No. 9351 pass Combe Florey with the 1pm from Bishops Lydeard on September 25. NICK GILLIAM



GWR 2-6-2T No. 4110 approaches Nornvis Bridge with the 6pm goods from Bishops Lydeard on September 26. NICK GILLIAM

the day, bringing welcome business both to the railway and the communities along its route.

The biggest event of the trio was the September 25-27 Autumn Steam Weekend, which brought in the crowds – both enthusiasts and the general public alike – to see locomotives in action.

As reported last issue, one of the guests made its third appearance on the Minehead branch. GWR large prairie No. 4110, which was built at Swindon in 1936, was allocated to Taunton shed in 1962/63, from where its duties included running over the line to the resort.

From pillar to post

Withdrawn in June 1965 and sent to Barry scrapyard, in May 1979 it became the 100th locomotive to be rescued from there after the Great Western Preservation Group bought it. In 2015, it was sold to the WSR, which aimed to return it to running order.

However, in 2018, it was resold to the Dartmouth Steam Railway, which sent it to Cranmore on the East Somerset Railway for a contract overhaul, and it ran again in February 2023 before returning to the DSR.

The other guest locomotives brought in especially for the event were the Bahamas Locomotive Society's LNWR 0-6-2T Coal Tank No. 1054, from the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway; Ivatt 2-6-2T, from the Isle of Wight Steam Railway; and a late addition in Andrew Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 2315 of 1951 *Lady Ingrid*, courtesy of owner Martin French, Currently based at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, it had been undergoing repair work at Williton.

It was also the last weekend of operation for GWR 4-6-0 No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* before its return to the Severn Valley Railway, and it ran alongside its SVR stablemate sister No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor*.

Also running were WR 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor* and WSR 2-6-0 No. 9351, with Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T No. 1857 of 1952 and Barclay 0-4-0F No. 1984 of 1930 *Boots No. 1*, which, like No. 2315, were rostered for shunting demonstrations at Minehead.

Apart from rain showers on the Sunday, the weather was good and the trains well-filled. Passengers and visitors could call in at the museums at Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor, visit the Taunton Model Railway Group at Bishops Lydeard, and see inside diesel cabs of die at the Williton home of the Diesel and Electric Group.

The WSR will operate trains on selected weekday and weekend dates until November 1. Its programme of festive season special trains begins with workings for the Minehead station Christmas market on November 28/29 and includes dining trains, carol trains, fish-and-chips outings and Santa Expresses.



LNER A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* heads the sell-out Fox & Edwards tour from Bristol Temple Meads on September 19. LAURA STANDERWICK



Recreating the final years of its BR days, GWR 2-6-2T No. 4110 heads a passenger service at Doniford Bay. DON BISHOP



In common with most heritage lines in Ireland, the Fintown Railway experienced a drop in passenger numbers in 2025. HUGH DOUGHERTY



Bucking the trend, the Stradbally Woodland Railway experienced a 24.9% rise in ticket sales in 2025, compared to 2024. SWR

Irish heritage railway sector reports an overall drop in passengers during 2025

By Hugh Dougherty

HERITAGE railways in the Republic of Ireland suffered an overall drop in passenger numbers in 2025, with 86,665 passengers travelling on the trains, compared to 93,177 in 2014 – a 6.9% decrease overall.

The statistics are contained in the recently published Commission for Railway Regulation's annual report for 2025, which showed that there were winners and losers in the sector.

The busiest heritage line was the Difflin Light Railway in County Donegal, but its 41,225 passengers represented a percentage drop of 6.64 since 2024. The unique Lartigue monorail at Listowel saw a drop of 17% in ridership, with just 3147 travelling on the line.

The Waterford & Suir Valley Railway experienced a 10.6% decrease in passenger numbers since 2024, with 24,420 using its trains, while the Cavan & Leitrim Railway bucked the trend by having exactly the same number of passengers in 2024 and 2025, with 5000 riding its 3ft gauge line.

Leading the list of winner was the Irish Steam Preservation Society's 3ft gauge Stradbally Woodland Railway, which saw and increase of 24.9% in passenger numbers in 2025, with a total of 7560.

All heritage lines in the republic are narrow gauge or, in the case of the Lartigue monorail, no gauge, but the CRR also inspects and regulates the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland's operations, which, the report notes, are subject to a higher level of scrutiny and regulation compared to the heritage lines as its steam and diesel trains operate on the national network. However, carrying 10,800 passengers on a variety of special trains, including enthusiast railtours and its popular Santa operations in 2025, the society was still subject to a drop of 19.5% compared to 2024, following the general trend experienced by the heritage railways themselves.

The commission which undertook annual inspections of the heritage lines – and included for some the issue of improvement notices – did not speculate on the reason for the general decline in a passenger numbers.

However, in common with heritage railways in the UK, Irish lines are finding that they are having to work harder to attract visitors in light of the development of an increasing number of competing tourist attractions.

Another factor is economy, with visitors looking for value before spending money, especially on family days out, before committing to a trip on a heritage line. It is also worth noting that the narrow gauge lines are purely seasonal in their operations, generally running in the summer, with some, such as Fintown and the Connemara operation at Maam Cross, moving into Santa trains at Christmas.

A CRR spokesman for said: "We inspect and regulate heritage railways and main line operations by the RPSI to ensure that safety standards are maintained. The commission enjoys a productive, working relationship with all of the railways and operators concerned and recognises the fact that the heritage sector is an integral and important part of railway operations in the country."

'World's fastest' station ticket office to become a house?

A PLAN to turn the long-disused ticket office at 'the world's fastest station' – Little Bytham, on Stoke Bank, on the East Coast Main Line – into a three-bedroomed house have been lodged with South Kesteven District Council in Lincolnshire.

A reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 348, the freehold of the 1081 sq ft stone-built structure – last used when the station closed 67 years ago – was sold for £112,000 at an online auction on July 28, in which 10 bids were made by four different interested parties.

The station was the nearest to where A3 Pacific No. 4472 *Flying Scotsman* and A4 No. 4468 *Mallard* set world speed records.

Chris Hamilton has applied for planning permission to change the use of the building into a two-storey home.

While neither listed nor in a conservation area, a council report said that agent Rutland Planning stated that the "heritage-led" conversion would look to "restore and sensitively adapt" the building while "retaining and celebrating its historic fabric. The scheme represents a heritage-positive outcome, securing the long-term future of a valued historic structure."

The roof, brickwork and architectural features, unique to former railway buildings, would all be retained, while the "unsalvageable" timber sash windows would be replaced with double-glazed sash windows of the same size and appearance.



Rear view of the old ticket office showing the extent of neglect. RUTLAND PLANNING/SKDC

A second storey would be added inside the existing building to create two bedrooms and a bathroom, while the timber panelled dividing wall would be "sensitively modified" to create a single open-plan living area on the ground floor which would also include another en-suite bedroom, boot room, entrance hall and toilet. Tony Ansell, of Rutland Planning, said: "The proposed conversion of The Old Ticket Office is a sensitive, restorative, and heritage-led scheme that preserves the building's historic character while providing a high-quality three-bedroom dwelling.

"The works are minimal, reversible, and respectful of the building's architectural significance."

The application was yet to be decided as this issue of *Heritage Railway* went to press.

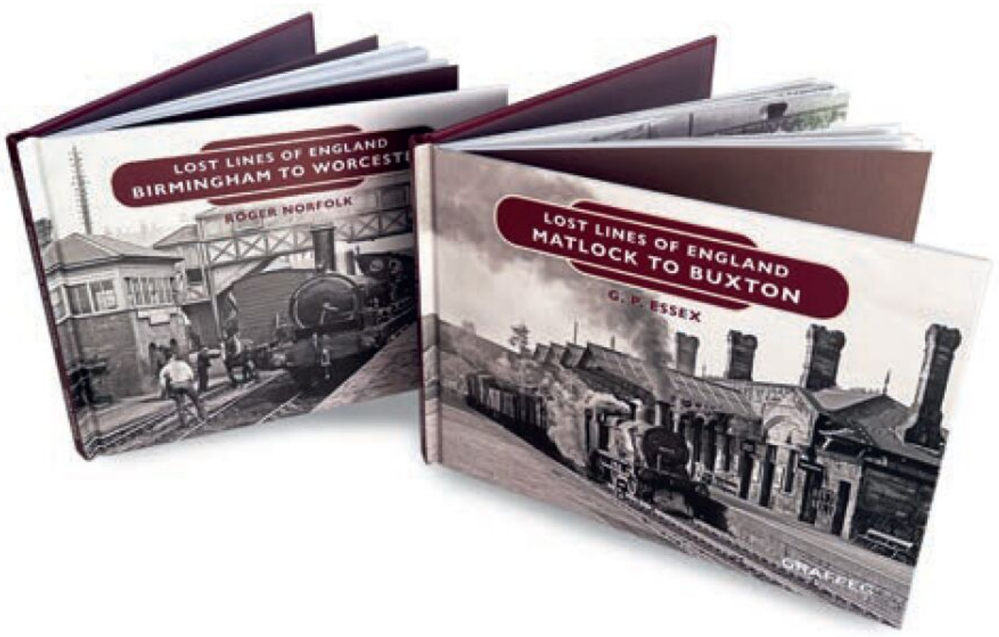
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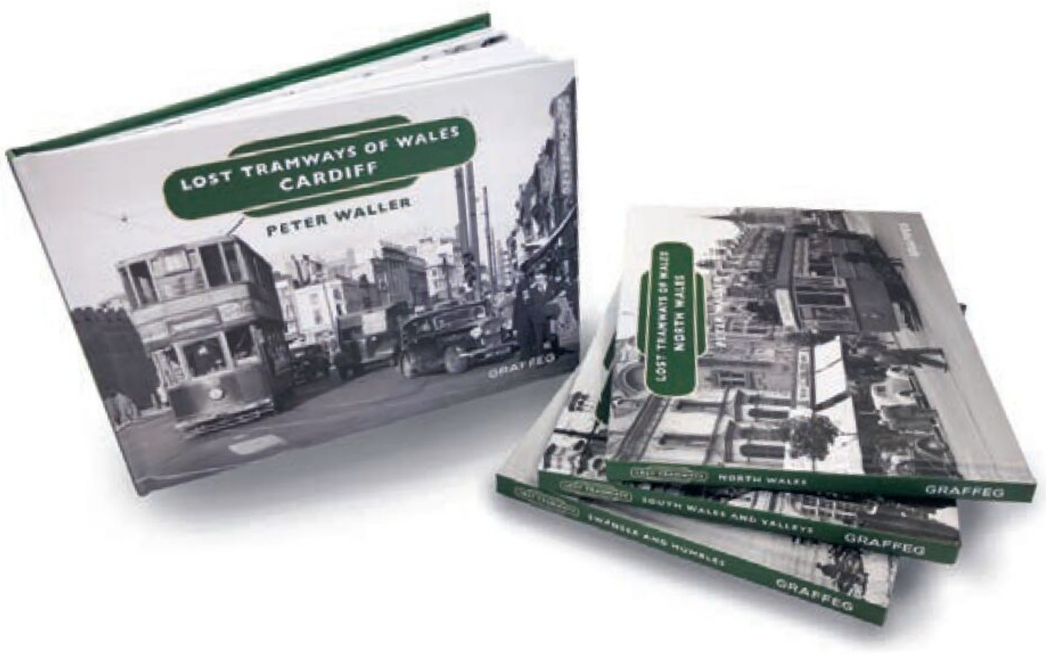
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Which main line railway object should be preserved next?

By Robin Jones

MEMBERS of the public are being invited to nominate railway objects for statutory preservation at the National Railway Museum.

September 18 marked the 30th anniversary of the Railway Heritage Act (RHA), which facilitated the designation of artefacts to be saved for the benefit of future generations.

Commemorating the anniversary, Rachael Bowers, railway heritage governance manager at the Science Museum Group, wrote: "Many people are often surprised to hear that locomotives make up less than one percent of the collection housed in at the National Railway Museum – although taking up 80% of the display space! The NRM aims to tell the story of rail in Britain – its past, present and future – and that story cannot be told with locomotives alone.

"When I walk around the NRM, I am met with a multitude of objects that make up the rich tapestry of rail history, from blueprint drawings and paintings to nameplates, clocks and even tiaras. Many of these items have been saved for the nation thanks to the RHA.

"When British Rail was privatised in the mid-1990s, there arose a significant risk that this privatisation would lead to important railway artefacts and records being lost, and important lessons, stories and voices of the railways along with them. To prevent this, on September 18, 1996, the RHA came into force, creating a system to identify and safeguard significant objects while in use on the railway.

"This early designation while the objects were still in use ensured they could later be efficiently preserved by museums and heritage railways.

"Over the last 30 years, the RHA has designated more than 1000 objects, from mighty locomotives to tiny models and everything in between. Initially managed by a statutory body called the Railway Heritage Committee, in 2013 the responsibility of the act transferred to the Science Museum Group, which created the Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board (RHDAB). Today, a team of Science Museum trustees, NRM leadership and those from the rail industry and other museum and heritage organisations work around the UK to identify and protect important pieces of railway history from being lost.

"The first designation after the act perfectly encapsulates how a railway object can tell so many stories of the railway and community they served. In the 1960s in Glasgow, steam trains were replaced by Class 303 electric units – faster, cleaner and quieter than the steam locomotives they replaced, passengers marvelled at their modernity, and they quickly became a familiar sight around the city, used every day by Glaswegian commuters.

"Initially painted in a distinctive Caledonian blue livery, the nickname 'Blue Trains' stuck despite various changes to the units' appearance until withdrawal in 2002."

"People remember the look, sound and feel of the trains and speak about them with a striking sense of ownership," said Vicky Kerrigan, collections manager at the Museum of Scottish Railways.

"I am always hearing stories of peoples' memories of them coming into use in the 1960s, how futuristic they felt, and how excited people felt riding them. These stories show the 'Blue Train' as a social space in motion – noisy, full of energy, and embedded in the communities it served.

"In November 1996, recognising the significance of the Class 303 in representing not only the history of rail, but also the social history of life in postwar Glasgow, the RHC made a Class Designation to protect all 50 surviving units. A representative model was chosen for preservation, comprising of a Class 303 unit 032 and a centre car from set 023, and the unit is now cared for by the Scottish Railway Preservation Society.

"The importance of British railway objects in exploring social and even global history is not to be overlooked. A much more recent designation by the RHDAB embodies not only a significant moment in global history, but also a poignant gesture of solidarity from UK railway workers.

"Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, freight operator GB Railfreight named Class 66 No. 66708 "Слава Україні" (*Glory to Ukraine*) in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Painted in the blue and yellow colours of the Ukrainian flag, GB Railfreight stated that 'the locomotive honours the people affected by the conflict as they continue to courageously defend their homeland.'

"In September 2022, RHDAB chose to designate the nameplate of this locomotive to 'remember both the conflict in Ukraine, and the railway family's response.' This included transporting 1500 tonnes of aid supplies donated by UK railway workers to Ukraine on the UK Rail For Ukraine train in April 2022.

"While most objects represent the world of fact, some are representative of a nonetheless culturally impactful world of fiction.

"The beloved romantic tragedy film Brief Encounter is widely regarded by critics, historians and scholars as one of the greatest films of all time. Taking place largely at a train station, it is also one of the most famous rail films in Western cinema.

"Although set in the fictional Home Counties town of Milford, it was actually filmed at Carnforth station in 1945. The station's large clock was





Above: Rachael Bowers, railway heritage governance manager at the Science Museum Group.

Above: A 1960s poster of Glasgow Electric Blue Train by Terence Cuneo.

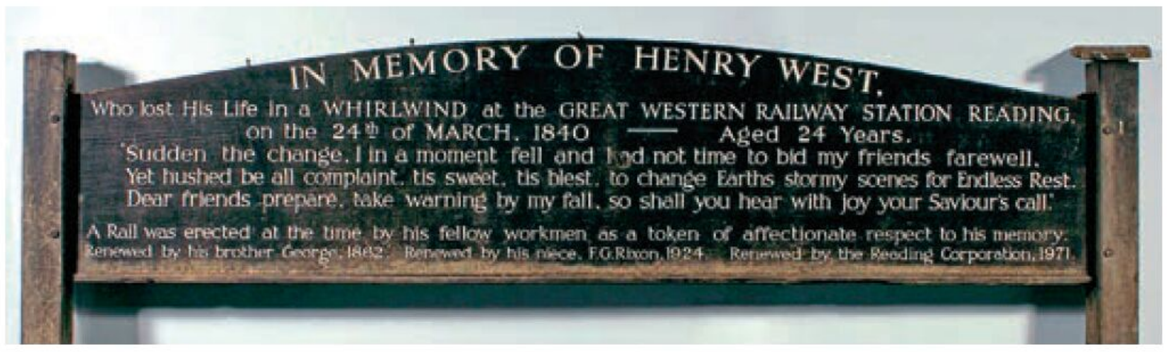


Built at Crewe in October 1978, HST Class 43 No. 43102 made history on November 1, 1987, when it set a world speed record for diesel traction of 148.5mph on a test run between York and Darlington as part of The Journey Shrinker. It saw service with Virgin Trains Cross Country and East Coast, GNER, National Express, LNER and East Midlands Railway, was later renumbered 43302, and named *The Journey Shrinker*. Withdrawn in May 2021, it is now displayed at the Locomotion museum in Shildon.

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Carnforth station clock being unveiled.



A memorial to Henry West, 24, who died in a whirlwind at Reading station on March 24, 1840, subsequently renewed by relatives and the town corporation.

shown regularly in the film, serving as a visual reminder of the pressures of time on this couple's brief and tumultuous affair.

"The clock went missing in the 1980s as Carnforth station fell into disrepair but was later found and repaired by local resident Alan Smith.

"In 2000, the RHC designated the clock, and it was returned to its original place in Carnforth station in 2002 where, ever since, it has drawn fans of this classic film wishing to briefly step in the shoes of this tragic romance, giving Carnforth station – with its famous clock, heritage centre and popular Brief Encounter tearoom – a place on the world cinema stage."

RHDAB chairman Tim Dugher said: "The process of identifying objects for designation is sometimes straightforward and sometimes complex.

"Often, it is a piece of engineering that made a palpable impact on the progression of BR and the lives of the people it serves, but sometimes it is something that appears, at first-hand, to be quite ordinary and yet, on closer inspection, represents a cultural, social or economic shift that merits preservation."

A further statement read: "The RHDAB works hard to locate objects for preservation, but it cannot have eyes and ears everywhere."

To celebrate the 30th anniversary, readers are asked to help identify all railway objects and artefacts worthy of preservation, as Great British Railways transitions back into public ownership.

"The 1000-plus objects already preserved by the act show us the breadth of stories around the UK that objects can tell.

"Who knows what seemingly ordinary object is currently in use that, unbeknown to the majority of those who see, hear, smell or use it every day, will come to represent a person, event, moment or shift that defines how rail evolved into the next generation?"

➜ To nominate an object for designation, email smgrailheritage@sciencemuseum.ac.uk, along with a photograph of the item and an explanation of why it is believed worthy of the designation.

➜ All images copyright of the Trustees of the Science Museum Group.

NRM celebrates start on building new gateway

CONSTRUCTION of the National Railway Museum's new Central Hall and Railway Futures: The Porterbrook Gallery is now underway.

On September 8, the museum welcomed key funders and supporters including representatives of Porterbrook and Mott MacDonald to an event to celebrate the start of constructing the York museum's new gateway. It will create creating new spaces to improve experiences for visitors and explore the future of rail.

NRM director Craig Bentley said "This celebration marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter.

"We are laying the foundations for a museum that preserves the past, serves the present, and inspires the future."

Mary Grant, CEO of Porterbrook, said: "Inspiring a new generation of talent to join this great industry is of the upmost importance... this new gallery will keep that spark alive by showcasing the vast possibilities the future holds.

"The journey of rail innovation does not have a final destination, and that's the story Railway Futures will tell."

After speeches, guests received a first-hand look at the progress being made, gaining insight into the early stages of construction, including excavation works and the laying of foundations for the future Central Hall. Guests were also invited to sign copies of the gallery's design plans which will be placed in a time capsule, creating a snapshot of the project at the very beginning of its journey.

A Friends of the NRM spokesman said: "It will be great to watch the progress of the building work over the next 18 months, but to be 'in at the start' is something which will remain with me for a long time."

The National Railway Museum is grateful to the community of funders and partners whose support is helping to bring the ambitious transformation to life.

Meanwhile, a new temporary entrance to the museum has been opened through South Yard to make arriving at the venue easier for visitors during this period of work.



Guests at the National Railway Museum's special event to mark the start of building work on the Central Hall project.

Mensa marks 80th anniversary with a visit to Didcot

A PARTY of Britain's intellectual elite visited Didcot Railway Centre on September 27.

The group of members of Mensa, formed from the top 2% of the general population in an approved intelligence test, were in Oxford at the 2026 British Mensa Annual Gathering to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of their organisation.

Mensa was conceived by Lance Ware and Roland Berrill during a chance meeting on a train and launched on October 1,1946, at Lincoln College, Oxford.

It was therefore considered appropriate to have a railway excursion as part of the birthday activities. Susan Graves, fourth from right in the photograph, said: "We have an annual Mensa gathering and Oxford is the natural choice this year. We have done lots of socialising and sightseeing."



Left: The Mensa party in front of GWR 0-4-0ST No. 1340 *Trojan* at Didcot Railway Centre. FRANK DUMBLETON

"With all the anguish about artificial intelligence leaping out of control, it is good to see human intelligence being celebrated," said a Didcot spokesman.

Wensleydale aims to complete return to Redmire in two years

By Robin Jones



Civil engineering work underway on the restoration of the Leyburn to Wensley section using Class 03 No. 03144. WR

THE Wensleydale Railway has begun the next phase of major track and infrastructure repairs as part of plans to restore passenger services from Leyburn to Redmire.

The five-mile section of line has been closed to the public since 2020 due to the deteriorating condition of the track and infrastructure on this section of the railway. Some of the track is life-expired and dates back to before the First World War.

Since 2021, volunteers and specialist contractors have been working hard to reopen the section, including carrying out drainage improvements, earthworks, cutting and embankment stabilisation, vegetation clearance, sleeper replacement and major track renewal.

Contract assistance

In this latest round of infrastructure upgrade work, the railway has hired specialist rail contractor Lampitt Rail Services. A 660ft section of 11 track panels has been relaid to the west of Leyburn station using donated materials recovered from the former Eggborough power station site in North Yorkshire.

The new track has been joined up to the running line and ballasting has been undertaken using the line's Dogfish wagons and Shark ballast plough brake van.

A large amount of sleeper replacement, replacing keys in rail chairs and reballasting will also be carried out on the 2½-mile section of line between Leyburn and Wensley. Further drainage improvement work will be completed, and a user-worked farm level crossing will have its wooden crossing deck replaced with rubber decking panels and the section of track running through relaid with concrete sleepers.

This work is expected to take up to four months to complete and will see the Leyburn to Wensley section brought up to required operational standards by the end of 2026.

The railway will then focus on the 2½-mile section of track from Wensley to Redmire following the completion of a detailed survey with costs and plans now being developed. This final phase will be particularly challenging as it will include significant track and sleeper replacement, considerable ballast renewal, drainage and earthworks improvements and replacement of several farm level crossings, at a cost of around £420,000.

Great progress

The Return To Redmire scheme has so far cost about £250,000, funded by the railway's charitable trust members, plc shareholders and members of the public who have responded to previous fundraising appeals.

WR fundraising and marketing manager Nick Keegan said: "It's great to see further progress on our plans to restore this stunning scenic section of our railway. At five miles long, this part of our 22-mile railway is longer than several other heritage railways in the region. This project is arguably the railway's largest civil engineering project in recent years, and it's a testament to the hard work of our incredible volunteers, and the generous funding support we have received so far, that we are now approaching the half-way mark in our plans.

"The railway's board has set a goal to restore passenger trains to Redmire by 2028.

"Reopening five miles of railway is not the end goal. We want to unlock Redmire's potential. We see this work as the foundation for a much wider regional development opportunity, with the railway playing a pivotal role in connecting Leyburn, Redmire and the wider Wensleydale visitor economy."

■ To donate to the appeal, visit wensleydale-railway.co.uk/return-to-redmire/

Brecon Mountain raising funds for air ambulance

THE Brecon Mountain Railway arranged to hold a fundraising weekend for Wales Air Ambulance after its newly completed car park was used for landing during a medical emergency.

The railway will give £1 to the charity for every passenger travelling on October 24/25, and WAA representatives will be at the railway selling merchandise and raising awareness of its work.

A BRM statement said: "Seeing the service operating first-hand brought home just how important suitable landing locations and rapid access are during a medical emergency. It also demonstrated the vital role Wales Air Ambulance plays within communities such as ours, where rural locations and challenging terrain can make reaching patients more difficult."

WAA, which marks its 25th anniversary this year, needs to raise £13 million annually to operate its helicopters and rapid response road vehicles.

First World War re-enacted at Ingoldmells

THE Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway held a First World War weekend in collaboration with the line's Historical Vehicles Trust and the Hull Rifles living history group and friends on September 12/13.

Trixie the horse appeared courtesy of Colin and Ros Copcutt, demonstrated the use of horses with narrow gauge wagons in the war. Two Tiger Moth aircraft invited to the event, however, were grounded by the weather. The winds forecast for Skegness on the Saturday were 25-29 knots, and the maximum a Tiger Moth can land in is eight knots, while on Sunday it was raining with a low cloudbase – not conducive to an open cockpit aeroplane with hardly any instruments.



Trixie hauls a First World War wagon rake. STUART YATES/LCLR



The Hull Rifles re-enactors gave a display of their weapons and talks to the visitors on the Seathorne Bank station platform. The two-carriage passenger train in the background has Motor-Rail Simplex 4wDMs *Wilton* of 1940 leading and No. 6 of 1944 on the rear. DAVID ENEFER/LCLR

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Historic Stockton bridges demolitions on hold following protests

By Robin Jones

A CAMPAIGN group has won a stay of execution for two Northern Eastern Railway bridges on a popular walkway near Stockton-on-Tees.

Crawford's Bridge and Black Squares Bridge were built as part of a 13-mile line from Bowesfield Junction, near Stockton-on-Tees, and Wingate, which opened in 1878 and mostly carried mineral traffic to the industrial centre of Teesside. The route was closed in stages in 1966-69, and the trackbed was acquired by Cleveland County Council in 1977 and transformed into the well-used Castle Eden Walkway four years later.

The two brick overbridges are prominent landmarks along the path, north of the old station at Thorpe Thewles, which opened as a visitor centre in 1983.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, the bridges' current custodian, claimed that the structures are at risk of "partial or complete collapse" and repair would "effectively require a full rebuild" at an estimated cost exceeding £250,000.

The council then asked its own planning department to decide whether the demolitions could go ahead under permitted development rights.



Dog walkers pass beneath Crawford's Bridge, one of the pair threatened with demolition. THE HRE GROUP



Cracks in the Crayford Bridge parapets and wingwalls date back to 1963 or earlier. THE HRE GROUP



Black Squares Bridge is located next to a new housing development at Wynyard. THE HRE GROUP

However, campaigners argue that the repairs could be carried out for less than the £41,000 estimated cost of demolition, which would take two weeks. In a letter to planners, the Historical Railways Estate (HRE) Group of civil engineers, greenway developers and heritage campaigners claimed that the council's chosen approach was not applicable in cases where a structure had become unsafe due to inaction, but where repairs were still possible.

The group saidit recently inspected the two bridges and explained its concerns over the local authority's case for demolition, stating that it rejected the council's analysis and that "there is no evidence of any meaningful risk to public safety despite the presence of unsightly defects (cracks in brickwork) which, at Crawford's Bridge, mostly date from 1963 or earlier". It said that the fewer cracks at Black Squares Bridge date from the same era.

The bridges are recorded as assets on the local Historic Environment Record, which imposes "important material considerations", said the HREG. Member Graeme Bickerdike said: "As heritage assets, it's important that any decision about the future of these bridges is made on the basis of reliable evidence, considers all viable options and their respective costs, and recognises the broader social value of the structures.

"We have yet to see any evidence demonstrating that demolition is the most appropriate outcome for local taxpayers."

The group said that Stockton Council did not release a consultants' report on which its intention to demolish the bridges was largely based. The report's existence was confirmed to group members during an on-site meeting with three council officers on September 15. Mr Bickerdike said that while the council has made several claims about the threat posed by the two bridges, it has so far declined to release the key evidence on which they are based.

However, letters stating that the demolition notification had been "formally withdrawn by the applicant/agent" were sent to objectors on September 30. A statement from Nigel Cooke, the borough council's cabinet member for environment, leisure and culture, said: "This decision has been taken to provide more time for additional information to be considered."

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MULTI-REGIONAL MARVEL ACROSS THE YORKSHIRE MOORS

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway's annual steam gala boasted something different, with its guest and resident line-up resulting in all four of the railway regions being represented in some form. **Owen Hayward** took a trip to see what was taking place.

At a time when gala planners have to balance so many factors when preparing for the biggest events of the year, selecting the right line-up can be a challenge. As we have seen on occasion, there are some locomotives that end up touring, and while the benefit of split transport costs might make one choice viable in that sense (particularly with ever-increasing fuel costs pushing lorry movement prices higher and higher), if it has appeared at a nearby line fairly recently, then its star appeal might not be as lucrative. With a general lack of spare availability in the sector, finding something else can also be just as much of a head-scratcher.

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway appeared to have struck quite the vein of gold when it announced its gala roster for its September 24-27 steam event. The appearance of LNER streamlined Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* is not new ground for the Moorsline; the A4 has visited several times, the two most recent occasions being in 2022 (while wearing wartime black after completing overhaul) and then in 2023, wearing BR express blue. You might be mistaken for thinking its appeal would therefore wane, but as the only currently operational example of its class in the UK, it continues to prove a draw wherever it goes – evidenced by the crowds that gathered on the platforms to see it throughout the four-day gala.

Joining it, however, was something treading new ground. GWR No. 4079 *Pendennis Castle* had been earmarked for the Moorsline's gala in 2024 but was withdrawn just a few weeks beforehand when issues with priming (whereby water is carried over from the boiler into the cylinders with potentially catastrophic consequences) saw it withdrawn from service and replaced by the Epping Ongar Railway's Hall class No. 4953 *Pitchford Hall* (as covered in *Heritage Railway* issue 325). Getting Didcot Railway Centre's flagship Castle class 4-6-0 to the NYMR remained a strong desire, and while it was not available for last year's event, it finally made it to the line this year.

Top of the bill

While the two express locomotives may have been enough for some, for many it was the inclusion of LSWR 4-4-0 T3 No. 563 that was the highlight of the line-up. Returned to steam in 2023 for the first time since 1945, the locomotive's first trip away from its Swanage Railway home was in April 2025 for the Mid-Hants Railway's spring steam gala. It is in high demand for galas owing to its vibrant LSWR livery, its interesting history, and the fact it has yet to travel to many places beyond the Purbeck Isles – and the group caring for it is keen to ensure it remains untainted by oversaturation of trips away, accepting just a couple each year.

While *Pendennis Castle* and *Sir Nigel Gresley* showed their capabilities of more modern types of express locomotives, No. 563 (part of a class designed by William Adams for express services in the pre-Grouping days) also proved why the T3s gained the nickname of 'Hill Climbers' – a term applied after they proved their capabilities on the undulating Salisbury to Exeter route. The line between Grosmont and Pickering is no easy trek, with Goathland bank the steepest part of the line, having a gradient of 1-in-49 across almost three miles of line between the locomotive sheds and Goathland station, truly testing of a locomotive's capabilities. It is a continuous climb from Grosmont to the summit south of Goathland at Fen Bog; the same can be said of the opposite direction from Pickering, where gradients fluctuate between 1-in-332 and 1-in-49, although never as steep for as long.

For the Thursday, Saturday and Sunday of the event, No. 563 was in charge of operations at the Pickering end of the line, shuttling between there and Levisham station between the full-line workings. In order to get it there, a trip from Grosmont departed at 8.30am on each of these days, with the T3 pulling a pair of LNER teak carriages – four of which returned to service at the gala after several years of out service.

The teak rake (the majority of which is owned by the LNER Carriage Association, with some vehicles owned by the NYMR) is one of the iconic fixtures of the NYMR, and its absence in recent years has been noted, the reason for this being that several vehicles needed body and mechanical work. The agreement with the NYMR in regard to the LNERCA's vehicles splits responsibility for their upkeep, the latter maintaining the bodywork and interiors while the railway deals with anything below the solebar; however, the NYMR's resources have been needing to concentrate on the BR Mk. 1 stock that can operate to Whitby over Network



A grazing bullock appears unphased as *Sir Nigel Gresley* climbs through Esk Vale shortly after departing Grosmont. OWEN HAYWARD

Visiting from the Swanage Railway, LSWR T3 No. 563 glints in the morning sunshine as it passes through Moorgates with a pair of teak carriages on its way to Pickering on September 26. OWEN HAYWARD

Rail metals. Earlier this year, though, it was announced that the Moorsline was committing to getting four of these teak carriages back into service in time for the gala, and it did just that. All four making an appearance are owned by LNERCA and comprised Brake Third Open No. 43567 and Third Open Nos. 23956 and 56856, while the fourth, TO No. 13385, has been turned into an accessible carriage with toilet.

With two of the teaks (Nos. 43567 and 23956) allocated to the Levisham shuttle, the remaining pair were coupled to the rear of one of the full-line rakes, offering additional opportunities to enjoy the comfort of these Art Deco Gresley-era vehicles as they travelled the 18 miles of line between the two terminus stations.

Inter-regional

With *Sir Nigel Gresley* joining Moorsline resident P3 No. 2392 to represent the Eastern Region, No. 563 and Schools class 4-4-0 No. 926 *Repton* the Southern Region and *Pendennis Castle* the Western Region, Grosmont-based Stanier 'Black Five' No. 44806 brought it to a full house by flying the flag for the Midland Region – something not many heritage lines can (or have) done.

Nos. 563 and 926 spent the whole of Friday double-heading full line trips; both were designed as express-type locomotives but built 41 years apart. The Schools was also the last class of 4-4-0 wheel arrangement locomotives built in Britain and was, coincidentally, also the most powerful!



Working hard as it tackles Goathland bank, oil-burning S160 *Omaha* approaches Goathland station on September 24. OWEN HAYWARD



Flying the flag for the Midland Region during the event was 'Black Five' No. 44806, seen waiting at Goathland for a passing train on September 26 . MATT DITCH



9F No. 92134 passes Abbots House while masquerading as scrapped Bromsgrove-based classmate No. 92079, complete with replica electric headlamp. JAMES KINDRED



***Pendennis Castle* puts on a show as it rounds the curve at Darnholme on the climb to Goathland station.** MATT DITCH



No. 60007 puts down the power at Green End. KENNY FELSTEAD



Nos. 563 and 926 climb through Water Arc on September 25, the pairing giving a chance to compare Southern Region 4-4-0s. OWEN HAYWARD

Both of these locomotives also have some transatlantic history. After withdrawal in 1962 and restoration four years later, *Repton* was donated to Steamtown USA in Vermont and later out on loan to the Cape Breton Steam Railway in Canada, where its tender was modified to increase capacity. It was eventually repatriated in in 1989 and has been based on the NYMR ever since. Similarly, No. 563 was also sent to Ontario in Canada, albeit several decades later for a 2011 theatrical production of the The Railway Children, but it returned home later that same year.

Supplementing the multi-regional stars were other locomotives from the NYMR's home fleet, including BR 9F 2-10-0 No. 92134, which returned to service a few weeks ahead of the event after undergoing some intermediate works including the replacement of its superheater header, with that taken from the Great Central Railway's own example of the class, No. 92214. For this event, the locomotive took on a change of identity and bore the number of scrapped classmate No. 92079, a Bromsgrove-based locomotive which took over the role of the 'Lickey Banker' from the Midland Railway's unique 0-10-0 No. 2290 (known to many as 'Big Bertha') and which was withdrawn in May 1956. The locomotive's large electric headlamp was carried over to its replacement, and a replica of this was fitted to No. 92134 for the duration of the gala.

Completing the roster were Kitson-built Lambton, Hetton & Joicey Colliery 0-6-2T No. 29, USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 2253 *Omaha* (which has recently undergone conversion to oil-firing), and Type IV Cockerill 0-4-0VB *Lucie*, the latter giving brake van rides around Levisham between passing service trains.

One of the best

The four-day event welcomed more than 5500 visitors to the line, making it one of the best galas the railway has arranged in recent years.

Nick Simpson, head of mechanical engineering, said: "A lot of hard work went into the preparations. An event of this scale takes a huge amount of teamwork to put together.

"There is so much that goes on behind the scenes, from getting the engines ready to



No. 92079 arrives at Levisham with a train from Grosmont, passing No. 563 which was waiting in the siding to follow after the 9F with a shuttle to Pickering. OWEN HAYWARD

securing our visiting locomotives. All of this wouldn't be possible without the help of our visiting engine owners, volunteers and staff.

"It is really something to see everyone's efforts come together over the four days and hear such great feedback from visitors."

The event is known to attract both new and repeat visitors each year, and a survey conducted by the NYMR gathered positive feedback, including praise for the sheer number of locomotives in steam, with one visitor stating that their visit had been to enjoy their "first trip behind an A4 Pacific, which I waited 40 years for!"

Those who missed the gala were able to enjoy a second chance behind two of the visitors as they remained on the line in the weeks afterwards. *Pendennis Castle* pulled standard services on October 3/4 and 10/11, while *Sir Nigel Gresley* spent the latter dates on static display at Grosmont, where visits to the cab were available. It too then worked trains on October 17-20 as part of the wider celebrations commemorating the 150th anniversary of the birth of its namesake designer. HR



No. 4079 *Pendennis Castle* thunders through Hunting Bridge on the approach to New Bridge depot and Pickering on September 27. JAMES KINDRED



Right: LH&JC No. 29 and LNER P3 No. 2392 climb towards the summit at Fen Bog with Grosmont-bound service on September 26. The Kitson-built locomotive faced north and was the anomaly in the line-up, with locomotives on the NYMR typically turned southwards so they face uphill on the 1-in-49 Goathland bank. OWEN HAYWARD

GALA STARS GO ROAMING ONCE MORE

IF YOU missed out on seeing some of the stars of the NYMR's steam gala, fear not – there are further opportunities coming up.

As previously reported, No. 92134 was rostered for the Bluebell Railway's October 15-17 Giants of Steam weekend alongside a host of other BR standard classes. From there, it will be heading to the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway for that line's own October 30-November 1 steam gala. Its booking rounds off what might be the most impressive line-up for a steam gala there to date, with a trio of large tender locomotives on the roster to pull trains on the four-mile branch, while Sentinel 0-4-0VBGT No. 7109 *Joyce* will be on hand to offer brake van rides at Princes Risborough station. The 'Spaceship' joins previously-announced GWR Saint class No. 2999 *Lady of Legend,* which will head back to Didcot Railway Centre shortly after the event. Next year will be that particular locomotive's final year of service before being withdrawn for overhaul, so the C&PRR visit will be the final chance to see it away from its home as it will not be undertaking any further visits before its ticket expires.

Meanwhile, *Pendennis Castle* will spend Christmas and the new year in Cambridgeshire pulling services along the Nene Valley Railway.

In addition to Santa specials during November and December, No. 4079 will also be available for driver experiences on the first two weekends of 2027, with a 'Jolly Fisherman' dining train scheduled for January 2 and one day of public passenger trains on January 10, giving those facing the winter blues a chance to blow away the cobwebs.

While No. 563 has since returned home to Swanage, it wbe too long before it is back on its travels, having been booked for the Great Central Railway's annual post-new year Winter Steam Gala, which will take place on January 28-31, where it will also reunite with No. 92134, which will be stopping over for a short stay just as it did in 2026. In addition to home fleet locomotives, an additional guest is due to be announced soon, with the usual intensive timetable featuring goods and passenger services on the UK's only preserved double-track main line.

■ Further details on all these events can be found by visiting the respective railways' websites.



HERITAGE RAILWAY
THE COMPLETE PRESERVATION NEWS MAGAZINE

At the start of a four-day holiday in south-west England, BR Standard Class 8 Pacific No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* crosses Tiddy Viaduct, near St Germans, Cornwall, hauling the outward portion of Steam Dreams' 'The Cornish Riviera' on September 22, having taken over from diesel traction at Taunton a short while beforehand. DON BISHOP

NRM launches new search to find next generation of railway photographers

A PHOTOGRAPHIC competition launched by the National Railway Museum hopes to encourage the next generation of lineside snappers to pick up their cameras and share their experiences – with a new category for under-12s added for 2027.

Now in its third instalment, the competition will see the work of winners and runners-up displayed in an exhibition at the NRM's York and Shildon sites from August 2027, giving young photographers the opportunity to be showcased in one of the world's leading railway collections. This year's theme, The Journey and the Destination, invites entrants to consider how railways connect people, places and communities, and to share the moments that make those journeys meaningful.

The new 12 and under category makes it easier than ever for younger photographers to take part. Entrants to this category can now submit just a single image, rather than the portfolio that was a requirement in previous years, and all entries are submitted through the NRM's website.

Through fresh eyes

NRM director Craig Bentley said: "Whether you're photographing your daily journey, a family day out, a station close to home or a dramatic railway landscape, we want to see the world through your eyes.

"This year's competition is more accessible than ever before. You don't need specialist equipment, and you don't need to be an experienced photographer. If you've got a story to tell through a photograph, we'd love to see it."

The competition is open across three age groups: 12 years and under, 13-18, and 19-25. A panel of judges from the worlds of photography, railways and the creative industries will select the winners after entries close on April 4. For full details, rules and entry information, visit: railwaymuseum.org.uk/whats-on/young-railway-photographer-year

West Coast runs first trip with new central door locking Mk. 1 fleet

By Robin Jones

A SIGNIFICANT main line milestone was passed when West Coast Railways operated the Railway Touring Company's 'The Esk Valley' charter from Carnforth to Whitby and back on Friday, October 9 – with vacuum-braked Royal Scot 4-6-0 No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman* hauling nine Mk. 1 passenger-carrying vehicles, all newly fitted with central door locking (CDL).

The charter followed several years of West Coast negotiating with the Office of Rail & Road for exemptions to use its fleet of Mk. 1 stock on the national network prior to CDL being fitted. Since the expiry of its last exemption at the beginning of 2024, WCR has had to rely on CDL-fitted Mk. 2 vehicles, which are air-braked only.

The Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company's 'Border City Express' from Bradford Foster Square to Carlisle, due to run six days earlier, was cancelled when West Coast had no suitable steam locomotive available on that date.

When the booking was made, West Coast had fully expected to have an exemption in place, but the ORR had subsequently rejected its application.

The only air-braked locomotive available from the West Coast fleet on the same day, Battle of Britain 4-6-2 No. 34067 *Tangmere*, was already booked for RTC's 'Cumbrian Mountain Express' from Preston to Carlisle and Carnforth.

Exemption case

West Coast, in common with other charter operators, had been granted exemptions from using CDL since 2003; it was permitted to run passenger services on the main line with an alternative locking system to CDL and robust traditional safety measures.

However, following an application submitted by West Coast two years prior to its then current exemption expiring in March 2023, the company was told by the ORR that it had changed its view on CDL and that its exemption would not be renewed, unless a commitment to CDL fitment was made.

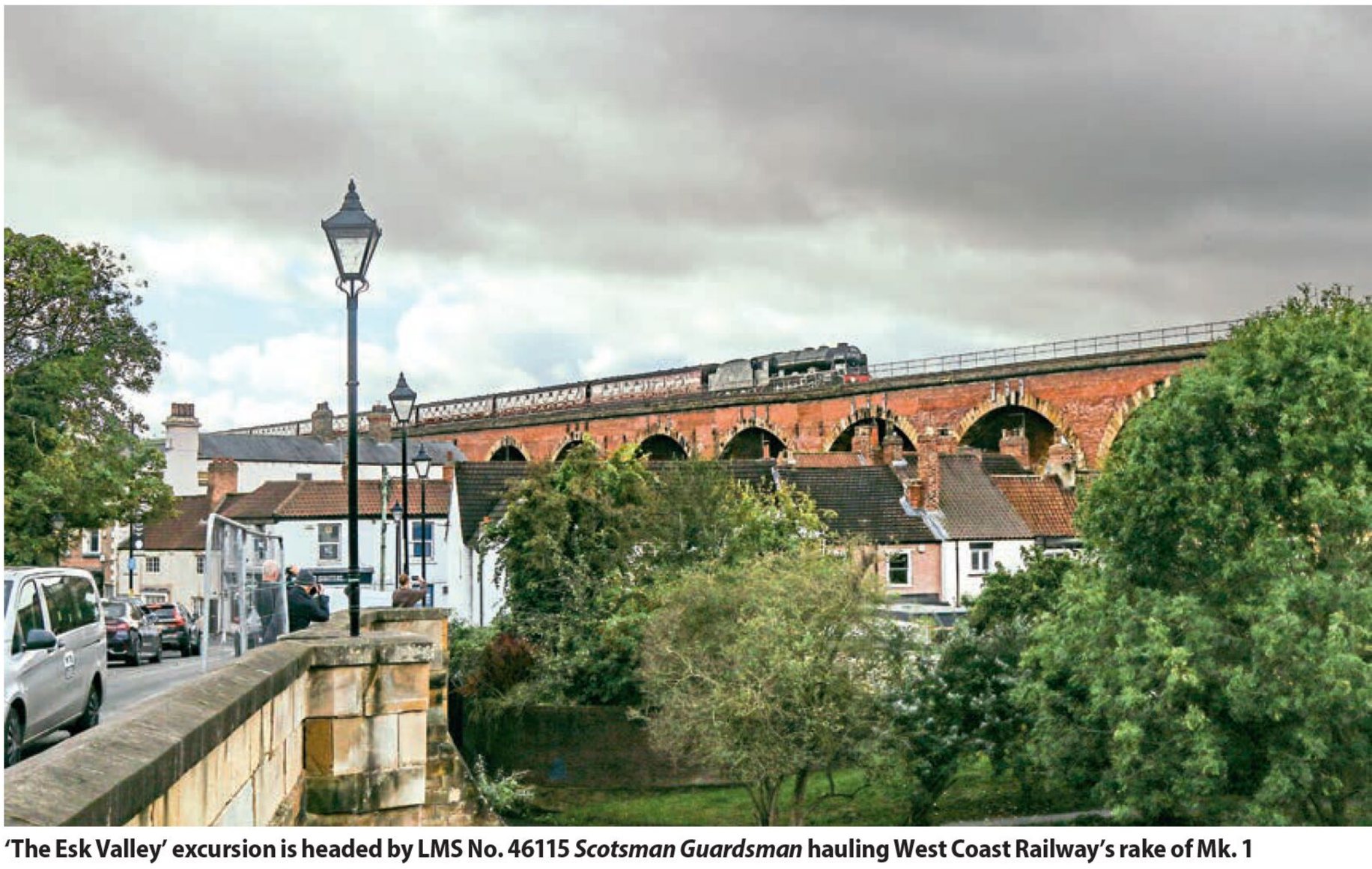
As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 315, WCR made an application to the High Court for a judicial review, citing the ORR's decision-making process as unlawful.

Following the hearing in November 2023, the judgement concluded that the ORR's process in arriving at the decision not to grant a further exemption certificate was lawful.

West Coast, as the UK's largest national network heritage rail operator, with its Mk. 1 fleet comprising about two-thirds of the country's main line heritage rolling stock, said it would work towards finding a long-term solution to allow its Mk. 1 fleet to continue in use.

The decision also had a significant impact on the WCR's high-profile 'The Jacobite' tourist service between Fort William and Mallaig. In 2024 and 2025, 'The Jacobite' – a plank of the West Highlands tourist economy – used Mk. 2 carriages fitted with CDL, but this option was considered very costly as seating capacity was significantly reduced, and it also required a diesel locomotive to provide power for the coaches.

This year, the normal Easter start for 'The Jacobite' was delayed, and services resumed in June using Mk. 2 coaches while West Coast waited for a further exemption to allow it more time to fit CDL, which, in the event, was not forthcoming.



'The Esk Valley' excursion is headed by LMS No. 46115 *Scotsman Guardsman* hauling West Coast Railway's rake of Mk. 1 coaches fitted with central door locking over Yarm Viaduct over the River Tees on the outbound journey to Whitby on October 9. SAM YEELES

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Above: En route to Whitby, No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman* passes Grosmont with 'The Esk Valley.' ANDREW JEFFERY

Right: Battle of Britain 4-6-2 34067 *Tangmere* nears the summit of the 1-in-73 climb out of Blackburn at Ramsgreave with the 'Cumbrian Mountain Express' on October 3. DAVID MOGG



Recently-overhauled LMS 8F 2-8-0 No. 48151, which last ran in 2019, heads away from Carnforth on September 30 with a private West Coast Railways charter to Upperby, Settle and Blackburn. ANDREW NAYLOR

InterCity plans 'Electric Boogaloo'

By Tim Hobman

INTERCITY Tours is to run a trip on Saturday, November 7 with its own Class 86 and 87 locomotives in top-and-tail formation and a Mk. 1 rake, visiting parts of Essex and East Anglia.

Starting from Crewe, the tour will run south on the West Coast Main Line, picking up additional passengers at Tamworth and Milton Keynes Central. From there, the tour continues south towards the capital via Wembley Central, Willesden Relief Lines, Camden Junction, Camden Road, Navarino Road Junction and Graham Road Curve, before arriving at London Liverpool Street for the final passenger pick-up.

From Liverpool Street, the tour will run via Stratford and then Forest Gate Junction, Barking, Laindon, Shoeburyness, Ockendon, and back to Barking, passing Forest Gate Junction again and returning to Stratford before heading via Shenfield to Southend Victoria for a break of about an hour.

London orbital

On the move again, the tour will retrace the route to Shenfield and Stratford, before heading via High Meads Junction, Temple Mills East Junction and Coppermill Junction, then picking up the West Anglia Main Line to Bishops Stortford and Stansted Airport. Following a reversal, the tour is planned to continue north to Cambridge, before retracing the route back to London via Bishops Stortford. At Cheshunt Junction, the train is expected to run via Seven Sisters Junction, Coppermill Junction, Temple Mills East Junction and Lea Junction, to arrive at Camden Road. Here, passengers who joined the tour at Liverpool Street have the opportunity to leave before the it heads via Camden Junction to retrace the route north on the West Coast Main Line, setting down passengers at their joining stations back to Crewe.

Tickets are available in First Class non-dining and Standard Class for this tour.

➜ **For more details and to book, visit inter-city.co.uk**

'The Bath Christmas Market Express'

SAPHOS Trains is offering the chance to travel to Bath for the city's annual Christmas market on Friday, December 11 behind either West Country light Pacific No. 34046 *Braunton* or BR Standard Class 7 4-6-2 No. 70000 *Britannia*.

Starting out at about 6am from Peterborough station behind a heritage diesel, the tour is planned to head east on the Hereward Line to pick up additional passengers at March and Ely.

From Ely, the tour will head south on the Fen Line to Cambridge for yet more passengers.

Taking the line towards Hitchin, the next pick-up points are planned for Royston and Letchworth Garden City. Joining the East Coast Main Line at Hitchin to head south, the final opportunities to board the tour are at Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.

Once in the capital, the tour will make its way across North London to exchange the diesel for steam at Southall in west London. Taking the Great Western Main Line, the tour will run via Slough, Maidenhead, Reading, Didcot, Swindon and Chippenham.

At Bath, passengers will have three hours to explore the city and the Christmas market before the return journey over the same route.

➜ **Tickets are available in Pullman dining and First Class non-dining. For more details and to book, visit saphostrains.com**

Three-in-one tours for BLS

By Tim Hobman

THE Branch Line Society is to run a tour from Doncaster to Edinburgh on Saturday, November 28 in aid of Martin House Hospice, with positioning moves either side of the main event.

On Friday, November 27, under the title of 'The Boston Stump,' with a DB Cargo Class 66 and Class 67 in top-and-tail formation, the positioning move tour is booked to start from Peterborough in the late morning. On board Mk. 3 coaches provided by Eastern Rail Services, it will head via Marholm Junction and Glinton Junction towards Spalding.

At Sleaford, there is an opportunity for more passengers to join before a reversal towards Heckington and Boston. Another reversal at Boston is planned to see the train move into the Boston Sleaford Sidings.

After a slight pause, the tour retraces the route back to another reversal at Boston, and then towards Heckington and Sleaford. Passing through Sleaford, it will head via Sleaford West Junction, Sleaford North Junction, Lincoln Through Road, West Holmes Junction, Gainsborough Lea Road, Beckingham Down Goods Loop, Bessacarr Junction, Black Carr Junction, Potteric Carr Junction, Up Decoy Transfer Line and Doncaster.

The tour is not expected to stop at Doncaster but instead head to Hatfield and Stainforth on the South Humberside Main Line for a reversal. The route back to Doncaster will be via Applehurst Junction, Skellow Junction, Adwick and finally Doncaster once again.

Passengers can either head home or find overnight accommodation for the following day's tour. Tickets are available in First Class non-dining and Standard Class for this positioning move tour.

North of the border

The next day, Saturday, November 28, will see the main event, titled 'The Martin House Scot.'

Starting from Doncaster with the same coaching stock, but this time with two Class 67s in top-and-tail formation, the tour will run via Hambleton West Junction, and Gascoigne Wood Junction to York to pick up more passengers.

Heading north on the East Coast Main Line past Northallerton, the next passenger pick-up point is Darlington. Passing Durham on the Down Slow, the final passenger collection point is set for Newcastle. Continuing north on the East Coast Main Line past Alnmouth and on the Grantshouse Down Passenger Loop, the tour will arrive in Edinburgh just after noon.

Passengers then have the option to alight for a break of about six hours in the Scottish capital or take advantage of a freight mini-tour with Class 66 and Class 67 locomotives. Those who join the mini-tour, for a supplement, will leave Edinburgh and run via Bathgate and Coatbridge Sunnyside, to the Shettleston Loop for a reverse move.

Heading back, the route is set to be via Sunnyside Junction, Whifflet South Junction, Mossend North Exit and Mossend Up Yard for another reversal.

Retracing the route to Mossend North Exit, the next location is expected to be Coatbridge Central, then Coatbridge Freightliner Terminal, and Gartsherrie South Junction for a reversal.

Heading to Mossend Up Yard, Mossend North Curve, and Holytown, the tour is then bound for Wishaw, before venturing to Law Up Branch Loop, Lanark Junction, Carstairs Chord and Cobbinshaw. The run back to Edinburgh is planned to be via Slateford and Haymarket.

Having picked up passengers who alighted in Edinburgh, the journey to Doncaster is set to be south on the East Coast Main Line, setting down passengers at Newcastle, Darlington, and York, before arriving back at Doncaster.

Tickets are available in Premier Class dining, First Class-plus non-dining and Standard Class on this tour.

The final part of the offering is set for Sunday, November 29, with a return positioning move to Peterborough titled 'Mr Brightside.'

Leaving Doncaster, again with a DB Cargo Class 66 and Class 67, the tour will head via Thrybergh Junction, Aldwarke Junction, Brightside Junction and Brightside Up/ Down East Slow for a reverse move.

Heading back through Brightside Junction and Holmes Junction, the tour is set to enter Millmoor Scrapyard (formerly CF Booth). Following another reverse move, the train is expected to revisit Brightside Junction, before heading towards Sheffield, visiting the Sheffield Down station siding and shunt spur/carriage Wash for a reverse move that will see the train arrive at Sheffield station.

Rare track routing

A brief pause is planned at Sheffield to set down and pick up passengers before the train heads towards Chesterfield, via Woodburn Junction, Beighton Junction, Barrow Hill Up Sidings, Tapton Junction, and Chesterfield Up Barrow Hill.

The next highlight of the tour is scheduled to be Toton TMD, where the train is set to make a reversal to leave the depot, then another reversal at Toton North Junction to head via Toton South Junction and Meadow Lane Junction, to Nottingham.

Having set down any passengers wishing to leave the train, the route home is planned to be via Grantham and the East Coast Main Line to Peterborough.

Tickets are available in First Class non-dining and Standard Class for this positioning move tour.

➜ For more details, visit www.branchline.uk

RTC's annual Armistice tour

THE Railway Touring Company will run it annual memorial tour, 'The Armistice Steam Express,' through the Garden of England on Wednesday, November 11.

Steam-hauled from London Victoria, the tour will run via Bromley South to Ashford International, then north on the Ashford-Ramsgate Line via Wye to Canterbury. With a planned noon arrival, customers will have two hours to explore the city before the return journey.

Leaving Canterbury, the tour will head east via Minster and onto the Kent coast line. Running via Sandwich and Deal to Dover Priory, customers will be afforded views of the English Channel, before turning inland on the South Eastern Main Line towards Ashford and Tonbridge.

After Tonbridge, the route back to the capital will be via Sevenoaks and Orpington, before turning back towards London Victoria and the journey's end.

Tickets are available in Premier dining, First Class and Standard Class, with a discount for junior travellers.

➜ For more details and to book, visit www.railwaytouring.net



Commuting to the 'Bongo' beat: Lunchtime travellers in London on September 30 were treated to the unexpected appearance ofB1 4-6-0 No. 61306 *Mayflower* on Saphos Trains' 'Golden Arrow' to Canterbury. Originally meant to have been pulled by BR Standard Class 8 No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*, the swap came when the latter was failed after completing a Steam Dreams Cornish excursion the week before. The original 40 Thompson-designed locomotives gained the nickname 'Bongos' as they were named after breeds of antelopes, although they later became referred to as 'Gazelles.' Here, *Mayflower* slows for a signal check at Denmark Hill, the locomotive having taken over from diesel traction at Southhall and the tour starting and finishing the day at Norwich. OWEN HAYWARD

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Second time's a charm: No. 89001 *Avocet* crosses Docker Viaduct with the outward leg of 'The Avocet Achievement' on October 7. TOM MCATEE

Avocet takes flight on second Glasgow attempt

UNIQUE Class 89 AC electric locomotive No. 89001 *Avocet* successfully reached Glasgow for the first time ever when it hauled its debut railtour to the Scottish city on October 7 – which itself was a rerun of an earlier attempt that ended early.

As reported last issue, a fault with the locomotive's battery charging circuits saw *Avocet*'s August 18 outing curtailed shortly after departure. Having undergone an extensive restoration and completing test runs successfully, it was a huge disappointment not only to the AC Locomotive Group and Locomotive Services Group, but also to the sold-out train of passengers eager to enjoy the 'Badger's' first public working in more than 25 years. Having set out from Crewe at its planned departure time, *Avocet* struggled to take power and was stopped at Warrington Bank Quay, where the train was rescued by Class 90 No. 90001 *Royal Scot* and towed as far as Carlisle before the trip was abandoned and returned to Crewe.

Within 24 hours, operator LSL InterCity contacted customers to offer either a partial refund or the transfer of tickets onto a new date, which was set for October 7. Thankfully, this time the train ran without a hitch, and the outward leg to Glasgow Central even stayed within six minutes of its scheduled time for the duration.

Departure from there that afternoon was almost 20 minutes late as a result of local rail issues and had slipped to 32 minutes down by the time it reached Beattock, but faced no further setbacks and thus ended its journey 26 minutes behind schedule.

No further tours have yet been announced for the 'Badger.'

Flying start for new A3 season

THE latest running season for A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* has got off to a resounding start.

Olly Edwards, director and general manager of promoter Fox & Edwards Events, which was appointed to organise special journeys and experiences with the world's most famous locomotive, including tours, said: "Our season with *Scotsman* is going superbly so far. We are delighted to have the engine back on regular main line tours, visiting a range of destinations and enjoying routes like the East Coast Main Line.

"We are particularly looking forward to our November 13-15 tours with Rail Adventure from Darlington to Stanhope on the Weardale Railway (as announced in *Heritage Railway* issue 350).

"That blend of national network and heritage railway is a winner all-round."

For more details of the A3's main line outings, visit www.foxandedwards.com

Before then, *Flying Scotsman* will spend October 23-November 1 on the Swanage Railway. It will be on static display at Swanage station on October 23, 26/27 and 30/31 and hauling seven-carriage trains between Swanage and Norden on October 24/ 25 and 28/29 and November 1.

Also running is the newly overhauled and upgraded late 1940s 'Devon Belle' Pullman observation carriage that SR volunteers rescued from San Francisco in 2007 where it was being used as a company boardroom. When the A3 is on static display at Swanage, visitors will enter via the carriage – where they can purchase drinks at the bar – before walking through the historic locomotive's corridor tender and on to the fascinating footplate. Tickets for the wide range of travel options behind *Flying Scotsman* are available from www.swanagerailway.co.uk



A century of locomotive engineering between them: LNER A3 Pacific No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* stands alongside Platform 2 Newcastle Central, opposite a modern-day LNER Azuma Express on Platform 3 for just a few minutes on September 23, before both depart, the A3 for York and the Azuma for King's Cross. The A3 was heading a Fox & Edwards charter from Chesterfield via York to Newcastle and return. RODNEY TOWERS

Teenage woman fulfils goal to join *Tornado*'s support crew

By Robin Jones

A HOPETOWN Darlington team member is celebrating a major personal milestone after joining the support crew of A1 4-6-2 No. 60163 *Tornado*.

Holly Cuthbert, 19, who works in the multiple award-winning venue's welcome team and also volunteers for The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, achieved her dream on September 27.

She is also one of a growing number of women choosing to get involved in activities that have traditionally been male-dominated and demonstrates that working with steam can be enjoyable for all.

Holly's achievement marks the latest chapter in a railway journey that began through the Young Producer programme, facilitated by the National Lottery Heritage Fund grant-aided Stockton & Darlington Railway 26 Mile Heritage Project, before she joined the welcome team.

Her passion for railways first developed while studying at college, but it was seeing *Tornado* at York station that sparked a lasting fascination with the A1, the first steam locomotive built for the main line since BR Standard 9F 2-10-0 No. 92220 *Evening Star* in 1960.

Holly said: "I completely fell in love. I was fascinated by the locomotive, and wanted to learn more about how these incredible engines operate."

Determined to pursue her interest further, Holly applied to volunteer with *Tornado*'s builder and operator, The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust. She completed training around working safely around rail vehicles, such as how to work safely at height, and through her personal dedication and volunteering in her own time, she progressed to become part of the support crew.

A1SLT trustee and commercial director Graeme Bunker-James said: "Holly's achievement symbolises the strong partnership between the trust and Hopetown.

"It is pleasing to see people from all backgrounds becoming involved in railway preservation, and Holly's story shows what can be achieved through enthusiasm, hard work and dedication. It is especially pleasing that she is a local volunteer joining the team."

Debut event

On September 27, coinciding with the venue's 201st anniversary event celebrating the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, Holly took her place alongside the *Tornado* team on Hopetown's heritage railway line, highlighting the fact that local people of all ages can get involved.

Coun Libby McCollom, cabinet member for local services at Darlington Borough Council, said: "As we continue to celebrate Darlington's railway heritage, it is wonderful to see young people like Holly playing an active role in shaping its future.

"She is a credit to Hopetown, to the wider railway community, and to Darlington, and I hope her story encourages other young people, especially young women, to explore the exciting opportunities available within the heritage, engineering and rail sectors."

Youth engagement officer at the S&DR 26 Miles Project, Jessica Woodley, said: "Holly joined S&DR Young Producers as a trainspotter with a keen interest in heritage. She brought her passion and expertise to the Young Producers Beyond the Tracks exhibition and became a main presenter of the group's social media series.

"I'm so proud to see her continue her passion for heritage rail with such a fantastic achievement."

Activities marking the final month of the S&DR bicentenary festival culminated in the SDR201 Steam Festival on September 26/27.



During Hopetown Darlington's celebrations to mark the exact 201st anniversary of the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, Holly Cuthbert stands alongside *Tornado*. LAUREN MCPOLAND/HOPETOWN DARLINGTON

Back on the rails

On September 26, the replicas of George Stephenson's *Locomotion No. 1* and the *Experiment* coach offered public rides marking the anniversary of the world's first public steam line.

For the bicentenary celebrations last year, as featured in *Heritage Railway* magazine issue 338, both were certified for use on the main line.

The following day, *Tornado*, which was built in Darlington and is based at the A1SLT's main line-connected Darlington Locomotive Works, took over from the replica train, in its case hauling LSWR brake third No. 1520, on loan from the Bluebell Railway.

The event underlining the town's rich railway heritage again attracted crowds, and each day featured nine return trips between DLW and the 1861 Shed at Whessoe Road.



Holly sitting in the cab of *Tornado* after officially joining its support crew on September 27.
JOSH PARKER/HOPETOWN DARLINGTON



The stars of last year's Stockton & Darlington Railway 200 and Railway 200 celebrations, replica *Locomotion No.1* and carriage *Experiment*, back in action at Hopetown on September 26. DARLINGTON BC

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Left: Merchant Navy 4-6-2 No. 35028 *Clan Line* stopped for 20 minutes at Kemble with the 14-coach Belmond British Pullman's 'Venice Simplon Orient Express,' chartered by UK Railtours and running from London Victoria for a day trip to Worcester as 'The Worcester Pullman' on September 26. RICH KELSEY

Memorial plaque unveiled to mark 1957 Lewisham tragedy that killed 90

By Robin Jones

A MEMORIAL plaque remembering the 90 people who died in the 1957 Lewisham rail crash, considered the third worst in UK history, was unveiled at St John's station on September 19.

On the evening of December 4 that year, two trains crashed in dense fog on the South Eastern Main Line after a 10-coach EMU carrying nearly 1500 passengers stopped at a danger signal and was subsequently struck by an 11-coach train headed by Battle of Britain 4-6-2 No. 34066 *Spitfire*, travelling at 30mph with about 700 people on board.

The eighth EMU coach was telescoped and destroyed by the ninth coach, while the impact threw the Pacific's tender and leading off the track, dislodging a pier of the bridge, causing it to fall and crush two coaches. A total of 173 people suffered injuries.

The Spitfire driver was acquitted of manslaughter after two trials. A Ministry of Transport report found that he had failed to slow down after passing two caution signals, so he was unable to stop at the danger signal, and concluded that an Automatic Warming System would have prevented the collision.



The newly unveiled memorial plaque. ST JOHN'S SOCIETY

About 150 people turned out for the plaque unveiling by local MP Vicky Foxcroft, who spoke of the strength of the current local St John's community and how it was honouring the efforts of residents in 1957 who helped with the rescue. There was a performance by the Deptford Community Choir and a trumpet solo by Josie Ashdown.

The event included a speech by Steve Penfold, until recently the local councillor, a description of the emotional impact of the crash by local historian Tony Redding, and a poem by current councillor Rotimi Skyers.

The plaque was funded by the Railway Heritage Trust and the St John's Society, a residents' association founded in 1997 covering the area of Lewisham that was previously called Deptford New Town. "As well as commemorating that sad event, this was a positive occasion, showing the community coming together," said a society statement.

TV cameras from BBC London recorded the ceremony and it made the lead item on the local evening news.

Britannia trip from Southend to Chester

ON Thursday, November 19, a Steam Dreams tour headed by BR Standard Class 7 Pacific No. 70000 *Britannia* will run from Southend to Chester for the city's Christmas market.

Diesel-hauled from Southend, the tour is booked to pick up additional passengers at Leigh-on-Sea and Barking stations.

After crossing North London, the diesel will be exchanged for steam, before taking the West Coast Main Line to head north. The final pick-up point for passengers will be Milton Keynes, before the tour continues north through Rugby and the West Midlands.

The excursion will then turn west at Crewe and take the North Wales Coast Line to Chester.

Passengers have just over three hours to explore the city before returning home hauled by a vintage diesel over the same route.

➜ Tickets are available in Pullman dining and First Class non-dining for this tour. For more details and to book, visit steamdreams.co.uk

Catch the 'Whitby Goth Express' to the home of Dracula this Halloween

By Tim Hobman

THE Railway Touring Company will run a trip from the west coast to the east on Friday, October 30 under the title of 'The Whitby Goth Express.'

Starting from Preston behind a Class 47, the tour will head south on the West Coast Main Line, picking up more passengers at Wigan North Western.

From there, the tour will head east on the Manchester-Southport line to collect more passengers at Manchester Victoria.

After leaving Manchester on the Huddersfield line, it will run to Stalybridge, where customers can also join the tour, then through the Standedge Tunnel for more passengers at Huddersfield and Leeds. Picking up the Cross Country Route, the final planned pick-up point is York.

Taking the East Coast Main Line to Northallerton, the tour will turn east onto the Eaglescliffe Line via Yarm, then onto the Tees Valley Line as far as Middlesbrough. Turning onto the Esk Valley Line, it will head via Battersby, Grosmont, and Sleights, with the planned arrival into Whitby in the early afternoon.

Passengers will have three and a half hours to look around the coastal port, where the annual Goth Weekend will be underway, featuring attractions and music inspired partly by Bram Stoker's Dracula and the novel's connection with Whitby.

Leaving as the sun starts to set, the route home will see the tour retrace its steps, setting down passengers at their joining stations en route back to Preston.

Tickets are available in Premier dining, First Class and Standard Class, with a discount for junior travellers.

➜ For more details and to book, visit www.railwaytouring.net



SR West Country class light Pacific No. 34028 *Eddystone* starts off of the St Blazey turntable after being turned and serviced at the MPower Kernow facilities, having worked the Railway Touring Company's 'The Royal Duchy' from Bristol. The small shunter is 1940-built 0-4-0DM Fowler No. 22928 *Peter*, formerly of Meeth Clayworks in Devon, which is awaiting restoration at MPower. JON HIRD

October

24 'The Settle & Carlisle Explorer'
Edinburgh Waverley, Keighley, and return.
Locos: 2x Class 20s TBA + 37025 Inverness TMD. SRPS

25 'The Shakespeare Express'
Derby, Stratford-upon-Avon, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 7029 *Clun Castle*. VT

30 'The Whitby Goth Express'
Preston, Whitby, and return. Diesel-hauled throughout.
Locos: 2x Class 47s TBC. RTC

31 The Golden Age of Travel by Steam
Circular tour of Kent from London Victoria.
Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. BEL

November

7 The Golden Age of Travel by Steam
Circular tour of Kent from London Victoria.
Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. BEL

7 'Electric Boogaloo'
Crewe, Southend Victoria, and return.
Locos: 86101 *Sir William A Stanier FRS* and 87002 *Royal Sovereign*. IC

8 'The Shakespeare Express'
Worcester Shrub Hill, Stratford-upon-Avon, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 13268. VT

11 'The Armistice Steam Express'
London Victoria, Canterbury West, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA (WCR Southall). RTC

11 Edinburgh excursion (Return)
Crewe, Carlisle and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 6024 *King Edward I*. ST

13 Stanhope excursions (AM+PM)
Darlington, Stanhope, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 60163 *Flying Scotsman*. FE

14 Stanhope excursions (AM+PM)
Darlington, Stanhope, and return.
Loco: 60163 *Flying Scotsman*. FE

14 'The York Yuletide Express'
London Victoria, York, and return. Steam-hauled between Leicester and York.
Loco: TBA (WCR Southall). RTC

14 'The Cathedrals Express'
Coleshill Parkway, Edinburgh Waverley, and return. Steam-hauled between Darlington and Edinburgh.
Loco: 60163 *Tornado*. VT

15 Stanhope excursions (AM+PM)
Darlington, Stanhope, and return.
Loco: 60163 *Flying Scotsman*. FE

16 York excursion
King's Cross, York, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 70000 *Britannia*. SD

17 'The York Yuletide Express'
London Victoria, York, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA (WCR Southall). RTC

19 Chester excursion
Southend Central, Chester, and return. Steam-hauled between Southall and Chester.
Loco: 70000 *Britannia*. SD

21 'Edinburgh Christmas Markets'
York, Edinburgh Waverley, and return. Diesel-hauled between York and Carlisle.
Loco: TBA (WCR Carnforth). RTC

21 'The White Rose'
King's Cross, York, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA (WCR Southall). RTC

23 'The White Rose'
Hereford, York, and return. Steam-hauled between Crewe and York.
Loco: TBA (LSL Crewe). ST

25 'The Christmas Sussex Belle'
London Victoria, Eastbourne, and return. Diesel-hauled from Eastbourne to Hastings (return only).
Loco: TBA (WCR Southall). RTC

26 Edinburgh excursion (Outward)
King's Cross to Edinburgh Waverley only. Steam-hauled from York.
Loco: 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*. SD

28 Forth Bridge excursion
Circular tour from Edinburgh Waverley. Steam-hauled throughout
Loco: 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*. SD

The information in this list was correct at the time of going to press. We strongly advise you confirm details of a particular trip with the promoter concerned.

Tour promoters

BEL	Belmond Pullman 0845 0772 222
BLS	Branch Line Society branchline.uk
FE	Fox & Edwards Events foxandedwards.com
HD	Hastings Diesels hastingsdiesels.co.uk
IC	Intercity 0800 038 5364
NB	Northern Belle northernbelle.co.uk
PNP	PNP Events londonthepolarexpressride.com
RTC	Railway Touring Company 01553 661500
SD	Steam Dreams 01483 209888
SRPS	Scottish Railway Preservation Society 0131 202 1033
ST	Saphos Trains 0800 038 5320
UKRT	UK Railtours 01438 715050
VT	Vintage Trains 0121 708 4960
WCR	West Coast Railways 0333 996 6720

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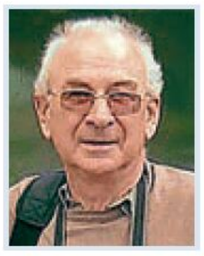
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LOCOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE THEN AND NOW



A selection of notable steam runs from around the UK, with a variety of locomotives at the helm, feature in this latest column from **Don Benn.**



Above: No. 34067 *Tangmere* sits at Waterloo on July 9, 2011, ahead of its 7.55am departure with an excursion to Weymouth. DON BENN

I START this time with Battle of Britain class Nos. 34067 *Tangmere* and 34086 *219 Squadron* in Table One. The run with No. 34067 was in the days when the annual celebration of the end of Southern Steam was done with no diesel involvement.

The day started with us on the 6.08am from Southampton Airport to Waterloo with Class 444 EMUs Nos. 444037 and 444043. These ran well, with a net time of 16¼ minutes Basingstoke to Woking, max 102mph at Winchfield, 100mph at Sturt Lane Junction and 101mph at Pirbright Junction. At Waterloo, I joined the happy band of brothers on the 7.55am departure to Weymouth. This had 10 coaches for 334/365 tons, headed by the Bulleid which was crewed by Dave Hewson and John Shane.

The run to pass Southampton was booked in only 86 minutes, and Dave Hewson set out with every intention of beating this. The start was from Platform 16 and then across to the Down main, thus taking eight minutes and 27 seconds to pass Clapham Junction. We had a speed restriction check to 25mph at Wimbledon, but from there we simply flew, reaching 79mph at Hersham and passing Woking in 28 minutes and four seconds on time. The engine was then eased for another speed restriction under the aqueduct near Sturt Lane. The good running continued with 70mph at Newnham Siding and a minimum of 61mph on the climb from Worting. Dave then let *Tangmere* have its head, reaching 84½mph at Winchester



On May 23, 2019, LMS 'Black Five' 4-6-0 No. 44871 and support coach enter Worcester Shrub Hill station. DON BENN

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Above: Dave Hewson, who was the driver of *Tangmere* on July 9, 2011. DON BENN

Right: On October 31, 1964, Clan class 4-6-2 No. 72006 *Clan Mackenzie* stands at Carlisle waiting to take the 9.25am Crewe to Perth forward. DON BENN



TABLE ONE: SALISBURY TO WATERLOO

Date	July 9, 2011	April 23, 1964
Train	7.40pm Salisbury to Waterloo	2.09pm Salisbury to Waterloo
Engine	Battle of Britain Class 4-6-2 No. 34067 *Tangmere*	Battle of Britian Class 4-6-2 No. 34086 *219 Squadron*
Load	10 coaches, 334 tons tare, 365 tons gross	11 coaches, 374 tons tare 395 tons gross
Driver	Pete Roberts	Sid Burton, Salisbury
Fireman	John Gibbons	Unknown
Recorder	Don Benn	Don Benn
Weather	Fine	Fine

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed	Sched	mins	secs	speed
Salisbury	0.00	0.00	00	00	R/T	0.00	00	00	3 late
Tunnel Junction	1.10	5.00	04	06	40		03	13	41
Porton	5.37		09	23	52½/50		09	02	50/46
Allington Box	8.06		12	17	56½		12	24	51½
Grateley	10.96		15	06	68/71		15	35	63/79
Red Post Jct	16.01		19	32	69		19	44	73
Andover	17.31	21.00	20	33	79	20.00	20	53	75½
MP 62½	21.16		23	39	66½		24	30	54
Hurstbourne	22.52		25	00	65/63		26	02	67
Whitchurch	24.56		26	43	66/70½		27	58	56
Overton	28.11		29	52	68		31	49	58
Oakley	31.28		33	21	trs 51*		34	58	65
Worting Jct	33.36	37.00	35	27	65½	34.00	36	56	67
Basingstoke	35.91	40.00	39	55	sigs 14*		39	06	72/76
Hook	41.50		44	51	75½/73		43	46	69/73
Winchfield	43.83		46	43	78/80½		45	42	72/79
Fleet	47.18		49	15	75		48	18	77
Farnborough	50.46	54.00	54	00	sigs 25*		50	53	74
MP 31	52.66		56	15	61½/69		52	41	71
Brookwood	55.67		58	56	66		55	08	75
Woking Jct	58.91	63.00	63	40	sigs 23*	54.00	57	46	73
Woking	59.37		64	11	54		58	07	76
West Byfleet	61.98		66	34	76		60	10	80
Byfleet	63.26		67	31	79½		61	08	81
Weybridge	64.51		68	32	76½		62	08	76/73
Walton	66.58		70	10	75		63	48	76
Hersham	67.75		71	05	74		64	42	77½
Esher	69.27		72	23	72½		65	56	74
Hampton Court Jct	70.32	78.00	73	15	72	63.30	66	50	75
Surbiton	71.62		74	22	69		67	57	73
New Malden	73.88	81.00	76	16	72		69	51	68
Wimbledon	76.42		78	33	63/64½		72	13	71
Clapham Junction	79.73	88.00	82	19	*42/57	73.00	75	02	*46/58
Vauxhall	82.37		85	32	sigs stop 10 mins		78	12	43*
Waterloo	83.66	101.00	102	46	2 late	80.00	81	37	4½ late

net time 80 minutes

* denotes brakes or speed restriction

TABLE TWO: CARLISLE TO CARSTAIRS

Date	Saturday, October 31, 1964	Saturday, July 31, 1965
Train	9.25am Crewe to Perth	1.12pm Liverpool to Glasgow Relief
Loco	Class 6 4-6-2 No. 72006 *Clan Mackenzie*	Royal Scot Class 4-6-0 No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman*
Load	Five coaches and one van, 202 tons tare, 220 tons gross	10 coaches 329 tons tare, 350 tons gross
Recorder	Don Benn	Don Benn
Weather	Dry, cold	Sunny and hot, calm

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed	sched	mins	secs	speed
Carlisle	0.00	0.00	00	00	5 late	0.00	00	00	
Kingmoor	2.08		03	44	48½		04	44	37
Rockcliffe	4.08		06	00	62		07	18	51
Floriston	6.09		07	54	66½/72		10	55	sigs 19*
Gretna Junction	8.72		10	08	66	11.00	14	57	41
Quintinshill	10.16		11	46	56½		18	30	trs 22*
Kirkpatrick	13.01		15	06	50		24	21	37/53
Kirtlebridge	16.72		19	52	trs 37*		29	59	trs 23*
Ecclefechan	20.10		24	24	49/56½		35	26	44
Castlemilk Siding	22.60		27	35	sigs 49*/45*		38	45	49
Lockerbie	25.84		31	15	58	31.00	42	09	58½/52½
Dinwoodie	31.77		37	10	64/66½		47	50	64
Wamphray	34.50		40	01	60		50	34	66
Murthat	36.90		42	58	sigs 47*		52	56	62
Beattock	39.76		46	24	51	45.00	56	57	
MP 41	41.00		48	06	43	46.00	60	49	banker 42694
MP 42	42.00		49	36	38½		65	49	35
MP 43	43.00		51	18	35		67	30	36½
MP 44	44.00		53	07	33		69	12	36
MP 45	45.00		55	01	31		70	55	35
Greskine	45.35		55	46	31		71	35	33½
MP 46	46.00		56	57	33		72	44	33
MP 47	47.00		58	44	35		74	30	35
Harthope	47.70		59	52	34		75	45	36
MP 48	48.00		60	27	33½		76	13	36½
MP 49	49.00		62	18	32		77	54	36
Beattock Summit	49.76		63	41	31	70.00	79	08	35½
Elvanfoot	52.65		67	04	65/70		82	37	59
Crawford	55.14		69	31	67/64		85	31	50
Abington	57.90		71	50	67½/62		88	09	61
Wandlemill	60.31		74	20	70½/66½		90	55	54
Lamington	63.23		76	50	73		92	40	66½
Symington	66.70		80	07	64	87.00	97	26	52
Thankerton	68.50		81	39	72/75		99	14	60
Leggafoot Box	70.10		82	54	72		100	51	53/59
Carstairs	73.65	88.00	86	56		96.00	106	38	

net time 83½ minutes

edbh MP 47 to Beattock Summit = 1020

net time 96 minutes

edbh MP 47 to Beattock Summit = 1830

Junction before checks intervened. Actual time to pass Southampton Central was 84 minutes and 14 seconds, or an excellent 77 minutes net, for the 79.25 miles. Continuation to Weymouth was more sedate, but arrival was just one minute late.

Here, we sought out the traditional fish and chips and a doze in a deckchair on the beach before LMS 8F No. 48151 took us on to Yeovil Pen Mill with a sustained 13mph on the 1-in-50 climb out of Weymouth and 52mph down the other side at Monkton. At Yeovil Pen Mill, No. 48151 ran round the train and took us to Yeovil Junction, where we stopped outside next to No. 34067, which was waiting to take us back to Waterloo. The driver was Pete Roberts and the fireman John Gibbons.

We ran to Gillingham in 29 minutes and six seconds as opposed to the scheduled 31 minutes. The climb to the summit after Sherborne was spoilt by a speed restriction, but with 76½mph after Templecombe, we were on time away from Gillingham. The 1-in-100 climb to Semley was topped at a very good 37½mph, and with no more than 74mph after Tisbury, we were into Salisbury just over seven minutes early. We then left on time for the run back to Waterloo, booked in 101 minutes due to lack of platform space at the terminus. Peter Roberts, however, had other ideas as he wanted to do it in the old 'Atlantic Coast Express' times of 80 minutes. After a slow start to Tunnel Junction, *Tangmere* climbed the 1-in-140 of Porton bank at a very good minimum of 50mph and then ran steadily down from Grateley, before being opened up to reach 79mph just after Andover Junction and a very good minimum of 66½mph on the 1-in-178 of Enham bank. A 51mph speed restruction at Oakley didn't prevent a good time of 35 minutes and 27 seconds to pass Worting Junction, comparable with many runs I had on the up 'ACE' when the booking was 34 minutes; it was the time to here that the 80-minute schedule was often won or lost. Now all that was needed was some good, solid, fast running – which we did despite more checks. However, we still sat outside Waterloo for the required time as booked. Net time though was 80 minutes. Our return home was on the 9.35pm from Waterloo in EMU No. 444032. This was notable for a sub-30-minutes time of 29 minutes and 21 seconds from Woking to Winchester, which was (and maybe still is) an RPS fastest time.

The second run shows what a light Pacific 3did on the Up 'ACE.' I was on a week's Southern Rail Rover in April 1964 and the Up working had Salisbury driver Sid Burton, a friendly chap who would try to keep time. His times from Salisbury to Worting Junction that week proved how important the 34-minute booking to pass Worting was – we left just three minutes late. Overall, this must be considered to be a reasonable run; maybe short of steam up Enham bank and as far as Overton, but some good, fast running afterwards. On April 20, Sid had Merchant Navy class No. 35013 *Blue Funnel* on the usual 11 coaches; his time was 81 minutes and 53 seconds with a number of checks and 33 minutes 46 seconds to pass Worting, net time a good 77½ minutes. Best of all was on April 24 when No. 35025 *Brocklebank Line* on 11 coaches left seven minutes late. The Worting time was 33 minutes and 20 seconds, and then we really flew, and with 88mph at Brookwood turned in a time of 76 minutes and 50 seconds – my fastest actual time on the Up 'ACE.'

Beattock outing

At the end of October/beginning of November 1964, I took a trip to Scotland with a friend with certain objectives in mind, one of which was to cover the 9.25am Crewe to Perth from Carlisle North. On Saturday, October 31, we stayed at a hotel nearby and caught the 8.51am to Stirling, which was the 7.10am from Aberdeen and A4-hauled, on this day by No. 60009 *Union of South Africa*. Our time to Stirling was 34 minutes and 56 seconds with very ordinary running. We then picked up the 9am Perth to Euston with a Class 40 and onto the 9.25am Crewe to Perth with BR Standard Class 6 Pacific No. 72006 *Clan Mackenzie*. The subsequent run to Carstairs is shown in the first part of Table Two – nothing special but a timekeeping run on a light load, with a minimum of 31mph at Beattock summit. I saw this train a number of times, but this was the only time with a Clan.

The second detail of Table Two shows a very different occasion which came about by chance on Saturday, July 31,1965. Once again, I was in Scotland and wanted to cover the 2pm Glasgow to Carlisle service which, at that time, was normally hauled by a LMS 'Black Five' with a load of 10 coaches. On this day it was No. 45148 on 10 for 360 tons full. We had left on time but were badly checked by adverse signals as far as Crawford. From here we did better, with 38mph over Beattock and 74½mph at Nethercleugh. Arrival in Carlisle was nearly 20 late. Within 20 minutes, I was rewarded by the sound of steam arriving in the main northbound platform, hauled by rebuilt Royal Scot 4-6-0 No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman*, one of only two left in service. It was on the 1.12pm Liverpool to Glasgow relief, and I gratefully clambered on board to stand in the corridor near the front. The load was also 10 carriages for 329/350 tons. The locomotive had been cleaned, but it was in very rundown condition, so it made a lot of noise but with fairly slow progress. The highlight was the climb of Beattock, for which we took a banker in the form of LMS Class 4 tank No. 42694. It was a fantastic, never-to-be-forgotten all-steam experience on a hot summer's day. I have a copy of a photograph by K M Falconer of this train leaving Carstairs.

Moving on to Table Three, we have two runs from Appleby to Hellifield, the first on 'The Dalesman' with *Scots Guardsman* on 11 coaches for 435 tons and the second with LMS Cornation class No. 46233 *Duchess of Sutherland* on 12 for 475 tons. Mick Rawling clearly had the better of things with a very good minimum of 38mph at Ais Gill summit. Perhaps the weather conditions contributed to the below-par performance of the Class 8, though my notebook doesn't suggest so.

> "No. 45348 produced a storming run, finishing two minutes early..."

Below: Stanier 'Black Five' No. 45345 at Prestatyn while working the 2.30pm from Llandudno to Birmingham New Street on July 31, 1964.
DON BENN



TABLE THREE: APPLEBY TO HELLIFIELD

Date	Tuesday, August 11, 2015					Saturday, February 7, 2015			
Train	'The Dalesman'					7.09am Euston to Carlisle			
Loco	Class 7 4-6-0 No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman*					Class 8 4-6-2 No. 46233 *Duchess of Sutherland*			
Load	11 coaches, 403½ tons tare, 435 tons gross					12 coaches, 436½ tons tare, 475 tons gross			
Driver	Mick Rawling					Mick Kelly			
Fireman	Henderson					Sam Scott			
Recorder	Don Benn					Don Benn			
Position	Nine of 11					10 of 12			
Weather	Cloudy, light NW wind					Misty, calm and cold			
	miles	**sched**	**mins**	**secs**	**speed**	**sched**	**mins**	**secs**	**speed**
Appleby	0.00	0.00	00	00		0.00	00	00	
Ormside Viaduct	2.02		05	00	53½		05	36	50½
Ormside	2.47	05.00	05	42	51½	05.00	06	24	47
Helm Tunnel	3.79		07	12	44½		08	00	43
Griseburn	5.36		09	28	37½		10	09	37½
Crosby Garrett	7.52	12.00	12	37	45	12.00	13	21	48
Smardale	8.97		14	31	50½		15	16	52
Kirkby Stephen	10.71	18.00	16	55	39½	19.00	17	36	41
MP 266	11.27		17	47	41		18	28	42
Birkett Tunnel	12.75		20	02	37/36		20	42	37½/36
Mallerstang	14.02	24.00	22	05	42/44	25.00	22	46	41½
MP 262	15.27		23	50	40½		24	40	38
MP 261	16.27		25	21	39		26	25	33
Ais Gill (MP 260)	17.27	29.00	26	55	38	29.00	28	17	30
Shotlock Hill Tunnel	18.73		29	02	46		30	45	33
Garsdale	20.60	33.00	31	33	*37	32.00	33	24	35
Rise Hill Tunnel	22.45		34	16	45		36	10	37½
Dent	23.87		36	33	*30		38	52	*31
Blea Moor Tunnel	26.46		39	59	48½		42	16	51
Blea Moor	28.78	46.00	43	42	tsr*24	43.00	45	53	tsr*28
Ribblehead	30.02	49.00	46	47	tsr*19	46.00	49	24	tsr*13
Selside	32.47		49	51	59		41	40	55
Horton-in-Ribblesdale	34.73		52	12	*56/60		44	03	62½
Helwith Bridge	36.77	55.00	54	18	*56/59½	52.00	46	22	*56
Settle	40.78		58	30	*54		60	41	59½
Settle Junction	42.75	66.00	60	13	*47/59½	59.00	62	44	56
Long Preston	44.76		63	11	40		65	09	40/sigs*4
Hellifield	46.00	72.00	67	27		66.00	71	12	

*brakes or speed restriction — *brakes or speed restriction

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MAY 23, 2019: NO. 44871 ON NINE FOR 340 TONS

	distance	gradient	mins	secs	speed
Kemble	0.00	level	00	00	
MP 92	1.00	143R/L	02	53	40½
MP 92½	1.50	200R	03	36	44½
Severn Canal	1.83	200R/L	04	02	46½
MP 93¼	2.25	100R	04	35	46
MP 93½	2.50	100R	04	54	45½
MP 94	3.00	94R	05	34	45
MP 94½	3.50	94R	06	13	44½
Sapperton Tunnel	3.63	94R	06	24	44

Left: Coronation class No. 46233 *Duchess of Sutherland* stands at Carlisle with the 'Cumbrian Mountain Express' ahead of its 2.40pm departure to Euston via the Settle & Carlisle line. DON BENN

The Great LMS Class 5

Table Four sets out a top-class performance by Ray Poole on the return 6pm working from Worcester Shrub Hill to London Victoria on May 23, 2019. The whole day showed just what this engine could do, helped by its 65mph limit and Ray's very fast starts. Our train was more than three minutes late away from the Cheltenham stop and so did not take the booked pathing stop in Gloucester Yard, but paid the price by being stopped by signals after Standish Junction as we had caught up to the 6.33pm Cheltenham to Paddington which was making its Stonehouse call. This would also stop at Stroud, so I was not optimistic about getting a clear road up Sapperton bank, but fortunately I was unduly pessimistic, as Table Four shows. Ray said he took it fairly easily from the signal stop so as not to catch adverse signals from the train in front but then at St Mary's really let fly. It was a truly superb climb and certainly in the top few recorded in recent years.

Chris Birmingham was clearly supplying enough steam to enable Ray Poole to use full regulator and 60% cut-off over the final mile of 1-in-60 to the tunnel. The noise was deafening and speed only fell from 38mph to 36mph on this stretch, which I calculate was worth 1690 equivalent drawbar horsepower (edbh). This is a very high figure for a Class 5 locomotive; up in the Class 7 category and possibly an all-time record. When I talked to Ray at Reading after he had been relieved, he told me how the engine was being worked and that he was pleased with its performance. He added: "Ray Churchill does it with the green one (WR Castle class No. 5043) and I do it with the black one (No. 44871)." Earlier, the westbound climb to Sapperton was also very good, producing 1480 edbh, the high-end figure normally expected from a LMS Class 5. The table shows details of this climb.

Finally, Table Five shows a couple of runs with 'Black Fives' on the North Wales coast line. This was my only visit in 1964, and the variety of motive power was much reduced from the summer of 1963, but with enough steam to make the journey worthwhile. I had gone up from Euston on the previous night's 11.50pm behind Class 24 D5081 on six coaches and then caught a Crewe-Chester train behind Class 40 D327. At Chester I caught the 8.08am back to Crewe behind 'Black Five' No. 45045, which was in very poor shape, losing time before I caught a train to Prestatyn behind D369 (another Class 40), which got me onto the 8.10am from Holyhead behind Stanier No. 44712, which turned in a good run with its heavy load, as shown in the table. Back to Prestatyn was behind classmate No. 45300, running late on the 11.55am departure. With eight coaches for 263 tons tare, this ran very well, picking up time at 38 minutes and nine seconds for the 26.50 miles, maximum 60mph. I now had a photographic break before returning to Chester behind No. 45345, as shown in the table.

TABLE FOUR: STONEHOUSE TO KEMBLE

Date	Thursday, May 23, 2019
Train	6pm Worcester Shrub Hill to London Victoria
Loco	LMS Class 5 4-6-0 No. 44871
Load	Nine coaches, 315 tons tare, 340 tons full
Driver	Ray Poole
Fireman	Chris Birmingham
Recorder	Don Benn
Position	Second coach
Weather	Sunny spells

	gradient	miles	mins	secs	speed
Stonehouse	300R	0.00	00	00	40½
MP 104	500F	0.94	01	04	47
Ebley Crossing	L/276R	1.31	01	42	46½
Cashes Green	620R	1.68	02	12	45
Downfield	272F	2.05	02	42	47½
MP 101½	234R	2.44	03	11	44
Stroud	200F	2.76	03	37	46
Bowbridge	250R	3.45	04	31	48½
Ham Hill	250R	4.19	05	22	46
MP 100½	250R	4.44	05	45	46½
MP 100	250R	4.94	06	23	48½
Brimscombe Bridge	100F	5.01	06	35	49½
MP 99½	185R	5.44	07	00	49½
MP 99	310R	5.94	07	36	50½
St Mary's Crossing	75R	6.14	07	52	48½
Chalford	70R	6.88	08	48	44½
Strawberry Cutting OB	74R	7.90	10	13	41
Frampton Viaduct Mid	Level	8.22	10	41	42½
MP 96½	75R	8.44	10	58	40½
Frampton Crossing	60R	8.53	11	06	38
Sapperton Long Tunnel	60R	9.01	11	53	36
Tunnel Exit Summit	90R	10.06	13	39	35
Sapperton Short Tunnel	94R	10.11	13	44	38
Tunnel Exit	94F	10.31	14	02	46
MP 93½	100F	11.44	15	20	57½
Severn Canal	Level	12.11	16	00	61
Kemble	Level	13.95	19	33	

Average speed through Long Tunnel: 35.66mph

*brakes or speed restriction

The 4.20pm from Chester took me back to Crewe. This had nine coaches for 294 tons tare and another 'Black Five' at the helm, and No. 45348 produced a storming run, finishing two minutes early after 68½mph at Worleston from the Beeston Castle stop.

Next time, I'll be looking at tours behind new-build Peppercorn A1 No. 60163 *Tornado*. HR



LMS 4-6-0 No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman* waits at Carlisle ahead of its 'The Dalesman' working on August 11, 2015. DON BENN

TABLE FIVE: PRESTATYN TO CHESTER

Date	July 31, 1964	July 31, 1964
Train	8.10am Holyhead to London Euston	2.30pm Llandudno to Birmingham
Engine	LMS Class 5 4-6-0 No. 44712	LMS Class 5 4-6-0 No. 45345
Load	11 coaches, 365 tons tare, 395 tons gross	7 coaches, 228 tons tare, 240 tons gross
Timer	Don Benn	Don Benn
Weather	Hot and sunny	Hot and sunny

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed	sched	mins	secs	speed
Prestatyn	0.00	0.00	00	00	3 mins late	0.00	00	00	1¼ late
Talacre	3.60		05	36	56/54		05	22	54½
Mostyn	6.45		08	42	62½/60		08	23	62/59½
Holywell	9.85		12	06	63		11	52	58
Bagillt	12.10		14	16	66		14	15	61½
Muspratts Box	13.45		15	32	61		15	40	58
Flint	14.10	17.00	16	39			16	21	60
	0.00	0.00	00	00			took water from troughs		56*
Connahs Quay	3.55		05	44	49		20	19	59½
Shotton Low Lvel	4.25		06	52	60		21	04	62
Queensferry	5.40		08	00	58/65		21	57	sigs 41*
Sandycroft	6.65		09	08	64/68		23	39	52½
Mold Junction Box	9.25		11	30	67/69		26	35	54
Saltney Junction Box	10.50		12	40	64½		28	09	49/sigs 5*
Chester	12.40	21.00	16	28	3 mins early	36.00	34	08	¾ early

* denotes brakes or speed restriction

GWRA scores with 20-strong BR line-up



A NAMEPLATE tour de force will ensure steam is the most dominant feature by far in GW Railwayana's November 14/15 auction. The LNER, with 12 representatives, will have the biggest say, followed by the GWR with six, the LMS with two, and BR with a single participant. There will also be pre-Grouping plates from three engines that fell by the wayside before the January 1948 Nationalisation of the railways and another from a colliery locomotive that entered Southern Railway stock in the 1930s and became part of the BR fleet for a couple of years.

First up, let us concentrate on the LNER, which has an obvious leader in *Miles Beevor* from A4 No. 60026, built at Doncaster in February 1937, withdrawn from Aberdeen Ferryhill (61B) in December 1965, and named after the LNER's chief legal advisor. A trio of Class B17 plates will throw their weight behind the Pacific, comprising *East Anglian* from No. 61659, *Thorpe Hall* from No. 61637 and *Wynyard Park* (No. 61618). All three were built at Darlington in the early to mid-1930s and withdrawn respectively from Lowestoft (32C), Ipswich (32B) and Cambridge (31A) in 1959/60. The name of No. 61618 is listed in my reprinted 1957 Ian Allan Combined Volume as *Wynford Park*, a very rare error by this indispensable publication, although it is correct in my treasured original 1959/60 volume containing all my underlinings.

Continuing with the LNER, we come to an A1 class quartet: *Great Northern* with crest from class pioneer No. 60113, *Willbrook* (No. 60150), *Midlothian* (No. 60151) and *Holyrood* (No. 60152). The first, a controversial rebuild by Edward Thompson in 1945, was withdrawn from Doncaster (36A) in November 1962, while the other three were built at Darlington in the early to mid-1930s and withdrawn from 2B Nuneaton also in November 1962), and the BR offering is *Clan Macgregor* from No. 72005, another Crewe product that entered post-Nationalisation traffic in February 1952 and earned its keep for just over 13 years before being consigned to the scrapheap in May 1965 from Carlisle Kingmoor (12A).

Railway pioneer

The trio of nameplates from pre-Grouping locomotives that entered the stock of the 'Big Four' in 1923 but failed to survive into BR service are *Richard Trevithick*, *Herefordshire*, and *City of Liverpool*. The first is from LNWR Precursor 4-4-0 No. 1650, built at Crewe in May 1906 carrying the name of a true railway pioneer and withdrawn in February 1928 before adopting its allocated LMS No. 5251.

Herefordshire is from another LNWR Crewe-built engine, Experiment class 4-6-0 No. 1455, which was outshopped in November 1909, renumbered 5537 by the LMS, and withdrawn in December 1933, and *City of Liverpool* comes from Great Central Railway Class 1 No. 428, a 4-6-0 constructed at Gorton in December 1913, reclassified B2 by the LNER and renumbered 5428, and withdrawn in April 1947 – just eight months before it would have been inherited by BR.

Finally, the nameplate spotlight turns onto *Hecate,* a Greek goddess of magic and witchcraft who graced an 0-8-0T that saw service in the colliery industry, on two light railways, the Southern Railway, and BR. It was built by Hawthorn Leslie in 1904 for the Kent & East Sussex Railway and numbered 4, and after initial service was loaned in to the East Kent Light Railway. In 1917-1919, it worked at Tilmanstone Colliery, one of the Kent coalfield's principal pits, after which it returned to the KESR. In 1932, it moved to the Southern Railway in exchange for another locomotive and two boilers and operated out of Nine Elms depot as No. 949 until Nationalisation, when it was allocated as 30949 by BR, although this was never applied due to its withdrawal in March 1950.

Cabsides and smokeboxes

Cabside numberplates going under Simon Turner's hammer include those from GWR Nos. 4087 *Cardigan Castle*, 4901 *Adderley Hall*, 5059 *Earl St. Aldwyn*, 6831 *Bearley Grange*, 6903 *Belmont Hall,* 6991 *Acton Burnell Hall* and 6996 *Blackwell Hall*, and from four electric locomotives, Class 81 E3003, Class 83 E3100, Class 84 E3036, and Class 86 E3111. Locomotives whose smokebox numberplates are in the sale include Nos. 4097 *Kenilworth Castle,* 4925 *Eynsham Hall*, 6863 *Dolhywel Grange*, 6954 *Lotherton Hall,* 62667 *Somme* – one of whose nameplates is also in the auction – and Britannia No. 70044 *Earl Haig*.

Heritage modern traction will also have a role to play in the nameplate category thanks to Class 43 Warships D844 *Spartan* and D856 *Trojan*, Class 47 D1652/47848 *Titan Star,* and Class 52 D1050 *Western Ruler* with cabside and classmate D1025 *Western Guardsman,* also with cabside.

A Cornwall coat of arms from SR West Country No. 34007 *Wadebridge* brings us back to the steam era, as does a headboard from the 'Royal Wessex,' a Waterloo-Bournemouth and Swanage express I logged at Basingstoke on September 9, 1959, headed by Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35021 *New Zealand Line*.

Platform totem signs have recently played a significant role in GWRA's auctions, and this sale's cast list of approximately 110 has a strong resonance to the locations of engine depots, examples of which are Nuneaton (1957 shed code 2B), Oxenholme (11C), Kettering (15B), Retford (36E), Starbeck (50D), Stockton (51E), Goole (53E), the delightfully named Boat of Garten (60B sub-shed), Thornton Junction (62A), Montrose (62B sub-shed), Guildford (70C), Salisbury (72B), Reading General (81D), Stourbridge Junction (84F),Worcester (85A) and Aberdare High Level (86J).

The auction on Saturday, November 14 starts at 9.30am and at 10am the following day.

Highlight

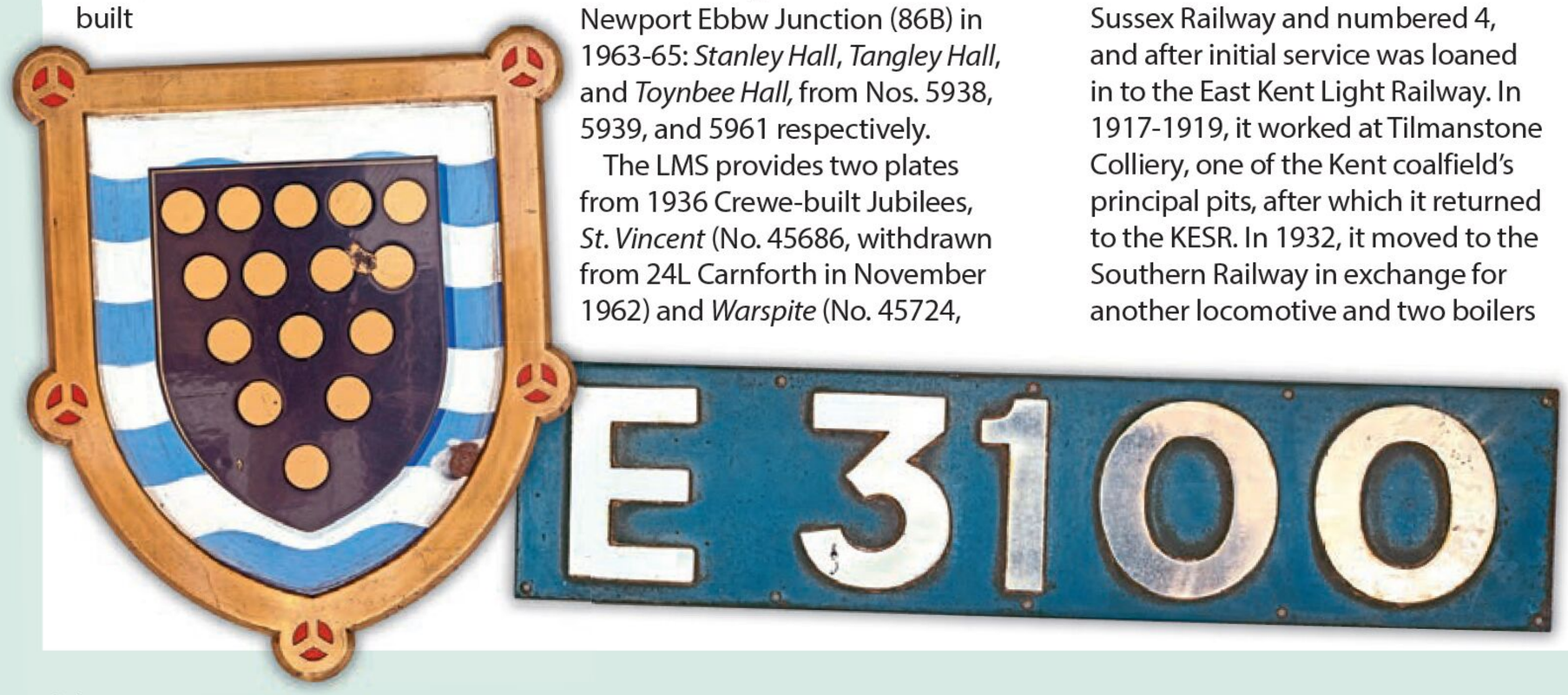
It's now the turn of the GWR, the highlight of which is *King James II* from No. 6008, a March 1928 Swindon product that was despatched to the scrapyard from Wolverhampton's Stafford Road shed (84A) in June 1962. Next in the pecking order is *Avondale Castle* (No. 7010), built by BR at Swindon in June 1948 and rendered surplus to requirements by 81D Reading in March 1964, and thence four members of the Hall class.

All are from locomotives built at Swindon in the mid-1930s and comprise *Faendre Hall* (No. 5954), withdrawn from Bristol St. Philip's Marsh (82B) in October 1963, and three from engines withdrawn from Newport Ebbw Junction (86B) in 1963-65: *Stanley Hall*, *Tangley Hall*, and *Toynbee Hall,* from Nos. 5938, 5939, and 5961 respectively.

The LMS provides two plates from 1936 Crewe-built Jubilees, *St. Vincent* (No. 45686, withdrawn from 24L Carnforth in November 1962) and *Warspite* (No. 45724, at Darlington in the BR era in mid-1949, and all taken out of service in 1964/5 when allocated to York (50A).

From further back in time is *City of Liverpool* (Great Central Railway 4-6-0 Class 1 No.428/LNER Class B2 No. 5428/1493, built at Gorton in 1913 and withdrawn in 1947) and *Somme,* from D11 class 4-4-0 No. 62667, which was outshopped by Gorton in November 1922 and taken out of service in August 1960 when a resident of Sheffield Darnall (41A).

The final two from the LNER are both from Darlington-built engines, *The Pytchley* with fox, and jumping into the modern era (well, sort of), *Blackbuck*. The former was carried by D49 'Hunt' class 4-4-0 No. 62750, built in September 1933 and withdrawn from Hull Botanic Gardens (53B) in November 1958, and the latter by Thompson B1 class 4-6-0 No. 61006, which entered traffic in March 1944 and was taken out of service in September 1963 when allocated to Lincoln (40A).



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TAL has LU memories all mapped out

TWO GWR cabside numberplates, an LMS 'Black Five' smokebox numberplate, a 'Southern Electric' station enamel sign and London Underground maps and postcards dating from 1905 to the modern day are among the highlights in a Transport Auctions of London sale on October 31.

The GWR plates are from 2-6-0 No. 7338 and 0-6-0PT No. 9750, and the 'Black Five' plate from No. 45486, a Scottish-allocated 4-6-0 throughout its 22-year career that was withdrawn from Ayr (67C) in December 1965. The sign, which advises passengers to cross a bridge to reach the booking office for cheap tickets to the West End and City, is from Ladywell. This station, in the south-east London borough of Lewisham, was opened in January 1857, is still open today, on the Mid-Kent Line six miles out of Charing Cross, is Grade II-listed, and handles 1¼ million passengers a year. The auction will be live online and starts at 10am.

Deltic is miles ahead with works and cab plates

A CLASS 55 Deltic flamecut cabside and worksplate were the standout top sellers by a country mile in Main Line Railwayana's September 26 auction, so no surprise there. What may have been a little unexpected, however, was that the plate outsold the cabside by quite a margin.

The pair came from No. 55003 *Meld*, which entered traffic in March 1961 as D9003, was renumbered in February 1974, and withdrawn from Finsbury Park in December 1980. Its English Electric/ Vulcan Foundry worksplate sold for £6000 and its cabside for £5000, some way ahead of the auction's third highest realisation, £3000 for the smokebox numberplate 80146.

For anyone who didn't read my preview of the auction in last month's column or isn't commendably knowledgeable about this particular engine, such a selling price might come as an eye-opener, so I must explain. This October 1956 Brighton-built 4MT was a lifelong Southern Region 2-6-4T, at work operating out of Bournemouth (70F) until the dying embers of Southern steam, and it was not withdrawn until the very last day, July 9, 1967. Such historical nuggets are what make the art of railwayana collecting so fascinating.

Surprisingly, I have got this far into my report without mentioning totems, but fear not, aficionados of this category, we are now there, with the Eastern Region topping the list due to Beccles on the Ipswich-Lowestoft Line selling for £2400 ahead of BR(Sc) Lumphanan on the Aberdeen-Ballater Deeside Line in Aberdeenshire that closed in 1966 (£1050). Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15%.

Royal Train press collection in the spotlight

NINETEENTH and 20th century railway paperwork from home and abroad will be the theme of an auction being held by photographs, negatives, slides and prints specialist JustaClickAgo on October 26-November 1, with one major highlight being material collected by the late Patrick Kingston, of Leamington Spa. In his role as a Royal press photographer, he collated press passes, cuttings, letters from Buckingham Palace, itineraries for visiting overseas Royalty and dignitaries, and details of train timings and carriages.

Among the oldest memorabilia on offer will be an 1895 North British Railway special train notice, an 1897 Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway telegraphic code book, and a 1900 cartage and arrangements booklet ex-Sheffield Bridgehouses station, the original terminus of the line from Manchester that opened in 1845 and was closed to passengers in 1851 but remained open to freight for another 114 years, until 1965.

Progressing through the years, there is a 1914 Midland Railway handbill, a collection of six 1914/15 letters from the GWR Worcester locomotive and carriage department relating to the steam heating of trains, a 1924 edition of the GWR publication 'The 10.30 Limited' about the 'Cornish Riviera Express,' an LNER 1932 Cambridge district engineers' office register of level crossings in East Anglia that includes many lines long since closed, and five LNER booklets dated 1933-35 concerning marshalling of traffic in Colwick yards.

From the LMS come two Second World War publications comprising an October 1944 passenger services timetable and an operating department of the LMS during the war book stamped 'Most secret.'

Overseas paperwork is represented by a 1921 Federated Malay States Railways passenger trains timetable.

Railwayana Auction Calendar

- **October 24**
  Talisman Railwayana
- **October 26-November 1**
  JustaClickAgo
  (paperwork)
- **October 27/28**
  Vectis
  (model trains)
- **October 31**
  Talisman Railwayana
- **November 2-27**
  Paddington Tickets
- **November 11**
  Lacy Scott & Knight
  (models and railwayana)
- **November 14/15**
  GW Railwayana
- **November 16-22**
  JustaClickAgo
  (photographs, negatives and slides)

Dalton totem tops Thirsk railwayana sale

PLATFORM totem signs are on a seemingly unstoppable roll at railwayana auctions everywhere, so it was no surprise that Thirsk Railwayana's September 18-21 sale was headed at £700 by one such example, Dalton, a station in Cumbria that was opened by the Furness Railway on the Barrow-in-Furness to Ulverston line in 1848 and is still operative today, 180 years later.

In an auction that put railway memorabilia from several corners of the country under the hammer, the runner-up, with a price of £560, was a BR poster promoting Penzance, a portside town in Cornwall 300 miles away, and then switching across to the Home Counties to an 18in dial platform wall clock from the ECML station of Welwyn Garden City (£420).

A BR Scottish Region enamel poster board followed (£370), and a platform lantern from High Field, an East Riding of Yorkshire station on the Selby-Market Weighton line that was opened by the North Eastern Railway in 1859 and closed by BR in 1954, fetched £350. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 12% (+ VAT).

■ TOP realisation in a Vectis sale of railway models on September 11 was £1200 for a 10¼in (260mm) gauge collection that comprised three Triang ride-on models including an EMU and a Pullman coach and other large scale equipment. The price excludes buyer's premium of 22.5% (+ VAT).

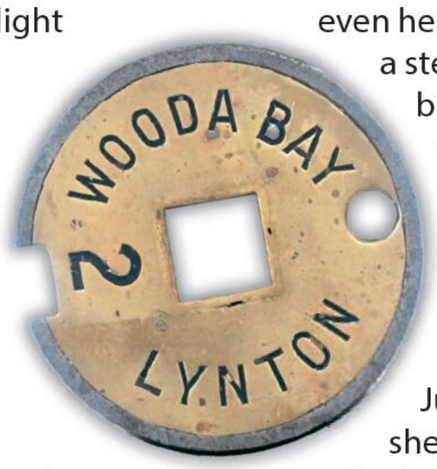
Worksplate challenges the top order





STEAM nameplates flexed their muscles in the customary way in Great Central's September 5 auction, as reported in last month's column, led by *Pegasus* from GWR No.3331 at £10,500, while Irish entrant *County Down* from Northern Counties Committee of Belfast B3 class 4-4-0 No. 21 was well and truly in the mix when it sold for £6200.

This month, the spotlight shines on the other categories, within which there was plenty of activity, resulting in a clear indication that the natural order of things can be challenged and even overshadowed. The message could indeed not be clearer, for the auction's top realisation of £14,000 was not for a main line steam nameplate but for an 1861 R & W Hawthorn worksplate (works No. 1128) from a standard gauge 2-2-2 well tank that was delivered new to the Whitehaven Junction Railway as No. 10 *Queen Mab*.



At £9200 came a GWR cabside numberplate, but there was a twist even here, for this wasn't from a steam engine either but a humble diesel shunter: No. 15104, a 350hp Swindon 0-6-0 that started life in May 1948 at Old Oak Common (81A) and ended its days in July 1967 at the Walsall shed of Bescot (2F), and also in the cabside territory was Southern Railway E759 from Lynton & Barnstaple Railway 2-6-2T *Yeo* (£7600).

While we are in southern climes, let us hop over the Solent to the ever-popular Isle of Wight, from which five items of memorabilia sold for a total of £16,200. They comprised a SR Ventnor West Station direction sign (£7000), SR Ventnor station platform target sign (£3400), a September 1952 BR Merstone-Ventnor West line closure poster (£3200), an Isle of Wight Central Railway direction sign to Town Station (£1600), and a SR Shanklin poster that fetched £1000.

Other realisations included £4800 for BR(E) totem Standon from the 14-mile St Margarets to Buntingford branch in Hertfordshire that closed in 1964, £3800 for a Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Tyer's No. 7 Wooda Bay-Lynton single line tablet, £2800 for a mid-1950s era 'Cornishman' headboard, and £1900 for the smokebox numberplate from SR West Country class Pacific No. 34012 *Launceston*. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

Prized model that took 12 years to build achieves £14,500

A 5in gauge live steam model of an A3 Pacific that took 89-year-old engineer Mike Stevens 12 years to construct sold for £14,500 at auction at Cuttlestones of Penkridge, Staffordshire, on September 17. It was based on No. 2501 (BR No. 60036) *Colombo,* which was built by the LNER at Doncaster in July 1934 and withdrawn from Darlington (51A) in November 1964.

West Midlands-based Mike, who built his first steam models when a schoolboy, is a member of Kinver Society of Model Engineers and has showcased his No. 2501 model at a variety of prestigious venues, including the NEC and the University of Birmingham.

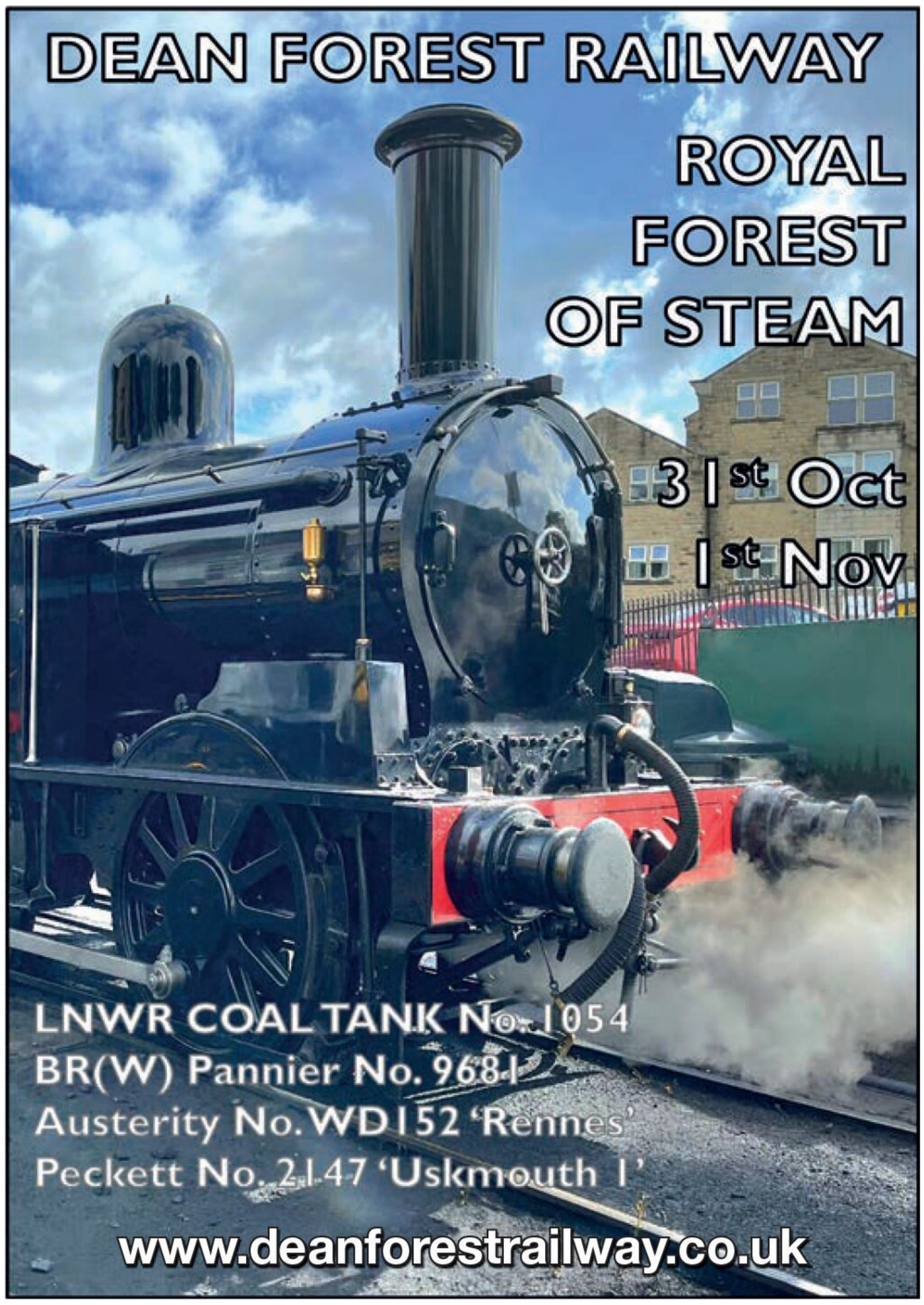
The model, which he built between 1983 and 1895, is his crowning achievement, but he now feels that transporting it has become too much of a struggle, so he has decided to concentrate on constructing smaller gauge models. Ben Gamble, Cuttlestone's managing director and head auctioneer, described the model as "an extraordinary piece of engineering that was built not from a kit, but as a one-off custom design."

The price excludes buyer's premium of 20% (+ VAT).



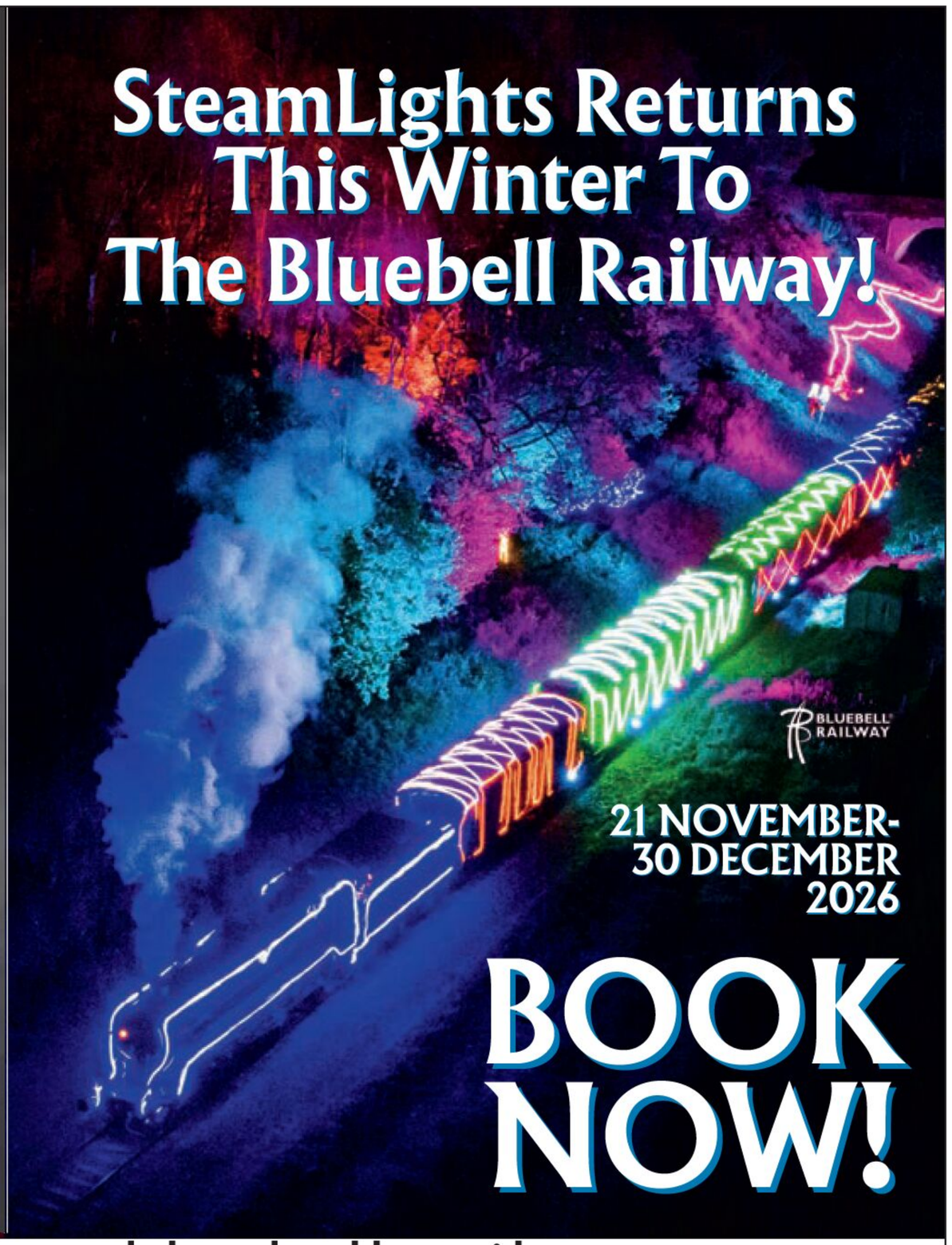
Immaculate A4 No. 60026 *Miles Beevor* has a full tender of coal as it emerges from Hadley Wood tunnel 10 miles out of King's Cross in 1961 with an East Coast Main Line Pullman express. A nameplate from the Nigel Gresley-designed Pacific will headline GW Railwayana's November 14/15 auction. TRANSPORT TREASURY/ GEOFF CASHMORE

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DEE-LIGHTFUL TIMES IN THE DEE VALLEY

After a few years of treading a tightrope, the Llangollen Railway has well and truly found its feet once more – and the momentum shows no sign of slowing. **Owen Hayward** spoke to the line's current manager Dave Hennigan, who highlights the value of its volunteers and the importance of good marketing.

It is tricky to talk about the Llangollen Railway without mentioning the elephant in the room: how close it came to vanishing in 2021 when the plc of the time entered administration. However, that's old news – those long-standing volunteers who fought for the railway to survive have been joined by fresh faces in both volunteer and managerial capacities, all aiming to prove to any doubters that the railway is on an upward trajectory once more and intending to keep it that way.

Over the last few years, the railway has reintroduced steam services, opened its extension to Corwen, brought back gala events, and experimented with new ways of enticing visitors to enjoy the stunning Dee Valley from the comfort of a trip on rails. Last year, previous Llangollen Railway Trust manager, Tom Taylor, stood down, and his successor Dave Hennigan, has perhaps increased the momentum it had at the time. "As a whole, the railway is doing very well," he explains. "We are 29% up on passenger numbers this year compared to last; revenue is up 35% and secondary spend is significantly increased because we have fine-tuned every part of the railway."

This has included relocating the shop from a small, cramped room adjacent to the ticket office to an integrated all-in-one space occupying where the station café used to be, the space it vacated now being a refreshment bar. Visitors enter and exit via the shop, driving up the likelihood of parting with a few extra pounds in the process. While it might mean the more traditional ticket office windows are no longer serving their purpose, it is a sacrifice that will undoubtedly pay dividends in the long run, and the signs to back that up are already showing promise.

"Every single event so far this year is showing a significant rise, whether that be the branch line gala, classic transport festival, or the 1960s and 1980s weekends," Dave said.

"What I wanted to for my first year was to take the existing events that the railway provided and look at improving them and their revenue before we start the process of working out what we're going to do next year. We've got some really exciting things we are going to be announcing over the next few weeks for 2027."



No. 7754 arrives at Berwyn on August 21. The station was voted the most scenic in Britain last year, and the local area has seen a recent visitor boom which has led to the Llangollen Railway management team thinking about how the line could be used as a transport solution within the Dee Valley.

The carriage works at Pentrefelin is a hive of activity, and the wide variety of stock can be seen from passing trains. An extension of the shed here is planned to increase the undercover space available, which will improve working conditions for volunteers.

Keep no secrets

In this digital age, with so much competition, getting marketing right is vital. If nobody knows who you are or what you do, then you are already at a disadvantage. This has been one area of particular focus for Dave, and anyone who follows the railway's social media accounts will not have missed the regular video content shared on them.

"When I started in October, many volunteers said they felt that the railway was 'the best-kept secret in Wales' – it wasn't selling itself enough. I come from a communications background, so I understand the importance of good communication and good marketing. As the volunteers had raised that we needed to improve in this area, I wanted to put them at the centre of that.

"On my second day here, I was taken on a shed tour and found myself thinking that if the general public could see what I was seeing, they'd be interested and want to come. I didn't want us to continue to be that secret railway, keeping things behind closed doors. Since starting with video posts, we are becoming increasingly popular, not just on social media, but in traditional media too – we're never out of newspapers now because we proactively tell our story. The videos can get up to 25 million views a month, and it's great to see other heritage railways looking at us and doing similar; if the whole sector is doing well, then we're doing well.

"This doesn't just focus on selling tickets – it focuses on the stories of volunteers and the work we do. It's about being there at the footplate, in the shed, or at the station every weekend and educating people about how railways run. I don't have much experience in this field myself, so it allows me to ask those seemingly 'silly questions' that the public might want to know answers to. I'm fascinated by the whole thing.

"Every heritage railway will tell you about their current shortage of funds, so like it or not, you must be willing to wrap commercial interest into what we do as a railway. Video content is one way we are starting to attract huge numbers of passengers from places further afield like the Midlands, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. We are also working with community groups to achieve that. Best of all, filming something on your phone and posting in online is free – we don't pay a penny in digital marketing at the moment."

Many of the videos focus on the railway's volunteers, whether they are preparing the locomotives, cleaning the station, recently promoted, long-serving or just starting – it is this human touch that connects with audiences, makes things easy to digest, and then the videos are more likely to be shared.

"Everything is generic, because people forget that we've got somewhere between 800 and 900 active volunteers at the LR," Dave points out. "Well, these are our champions; some people might not be able to come into the sheds and get dirty for a weekend or stand on the platform and dispatch trains, but they can certainly share stuff on social media. We actively encourage that, and it's working well.

"If a video goes viral, it can sell many tickets on the back of it. We are very careful that not every social media post is begging people to buy tickets, though. You have to find a balance; I would definitely say that the significant rise we've seen is thanks to telling our stories through social media.

"Earlier this year, some of the steam department went to Germany to visit railways out there, and we turned it into a research project to see how those lines are run compared to ours and used it to advertise our branch line gala at the same time."

One of the biggest successes was a video in which volunteer Hazel Birkenhead was told she had been sent an invitation to King Charles's garden party at Buckingham Palace, an annual event that recognises and rewards public service. Hazel has been at the railway for more than 40 years; for most weekends and special events, she is up at the crack of dawn to head to the kitchen of the volunteers' mess room, where she prepares breakfasts for those on duty. Step in here on such an occasion and you'll find people from all departments on the railway, and this is perhaps why the LR's volunteers have such community spirit. "That video got 1.7 million views and helped sell huge numbers of tickets," Dave recalls. "Audiences love a feel-good, people-centric story."

Old challenges, new solutions

Like every heritage railway, the cost of fuel is a constant concern, but the LR is exploring novel ways of addressing this.

"Prices are continuing to go through the roof, so one project we're looking at doing is working with other heritage railways to procure coal.

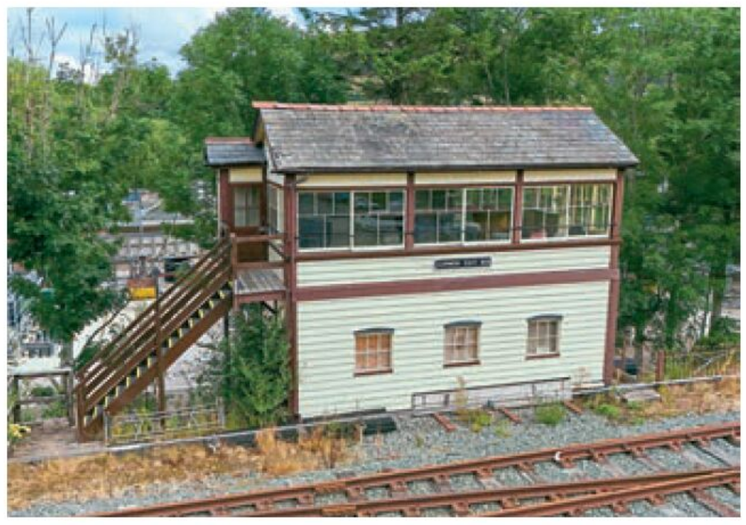
"Then there's a £250,000 project going through the Heritage Lottery Fund application process to look at installing a water heater for our locomotives. That will mean we don't need volunteers to turn up a day before just to light a warming fire which burns expensive coal – we just slowly feed pre-warmed water straight into the boiler. That's not hot water, so we're not thermal-shocking cold metal, but it is aimed at reducing the amount of time and expense it takes to get a steam locomotive hot at the start of the day.

"This should also help relationships with our neighbours. There are properties backing onto the yard, and while we do try to reduce the smoke blowing across them in the early hours, there's only so much that can be done.

"We are also planning on fitting our pannier tank No. 7754 with a Kylchap blastpipe to improve its performance. This should



In the eyes of trust manager Dave Hennigan, the Llangollen Railway has the best scenery of any standard gauge railway in the UK. Class 47 No. 47449 crosses the River Dee on Pentrefelin Bridge as it descends the gradient from Berwyn towards Llangollen station.



Corwen's signalbox was previously located at Weston Rhyn. Although the station is open, the signalling to control movements around it has not been installed, meaning only one train can run to and from it at a time. Rectifying this remains an ambition, but a qualified signalling engineer is required to take this project forward to completion.



Creating videos for the railway's social media platforms has given the line a noticeable boost in the online world, and part of that is down to focusing on the LR's volunteering activities. On April 9, Dave Hennigan filmed members of the steam department to promote the branch line gala, which started the following day.

"We are still working out our calendar for next year, but one thing I can say is that there will be more steam, including days with two locomotives running..."

also dramatically reduce the amount of coal we use."

Then, of course, there is rolling stock. The railway is fortunate that much of its stock was protected from the administration process by being owned by separate people and groups, but several railway-owned Mk. 1 carriages were sold off at that time. Some found use elsewhere, while others were acquired for glamping – including some that had only just been overhauled. Three of these were recently spotted on a site earmarked for glamping but which never came to fruition, meaning they are decaying and exposed to the elements.

Getting the remaining carriages up to a decent standard is an issue on Dave's mind: "It's great that we've dramatically increased the number of passengers visiting us, but we need stock that is fit to carry them. In my view, we have the best views of any heritage railway in the whole of the UK, but if our rolling stock is not up to standard, that presents new challenges. We're working on bringing two more carriages into service at the moment, but we also need to overhaul many of our currently operational ones too.

"We could really do with more TSOs. Several we did have were sold by the administrators, and we now only have two left. An area with big growth currently is secondary spend via things like on-board afternoon teas, which require open bay seating, and I will not put them on tatty carriages. We've hired an TSO from Crewe, which is one of those we're doing up to meet this requirement, but I wouldn't look at buying any carriages yet. Prices have skyrocketed lately, in part because of their perceived value as glamping vehicles, and many heritage railways want these open seating types too. Usually, the stock that comes up for sale have problems to overcome, so it then becomes an even more expensive matter, as well as time-consuming.

"The carriages being repaired will hopefully be done for Christmas – they need to be, as we need the capacity. That said, I think the industry can be too reliant on the Christmas season to make up the finances. There's no denying that it can be responsible for a large proportion of our annual sales, but we need to find ways of increasing footfall year-round.

"In recent years, weather-driven situations that have impacted these trains at several railways. We must make sure we're not too reliant on it because if it goes wrong, we'll feel it for a long time afterwards.

"Next year, we are running orchestra and market trains, for example. I'm also talking to a Sky Sports presenter about running a football legends train, similar to what we did with Red Dwarf's Chris Barrie earlier this year. There will be lots of exciting new experiences like this introduced over the next year or so."

Accessibility improvements

It's a hot topic – how accessible is your railway? Dave says that while the line is pretty good in some regards, there are still things to do to make it better.

"We did a survey about accessibility, and there were other suggestions made, but improvements to Corwen were the main crux of the feedback. Hopefully, we'll be able to alleviate that over the next couple of years.

"We are starting to raise money for a new standalone lift at the station there. The stairlift we have at the moment is slow and not best suited, particularly if it gets busy. To me, we must make sure our railway is as accessible to as many people as much of the time as possible."

Accessibility is, of course, not just about how mobility-impaired visitors navigate during their visit – it's also about how broader audiences are reached.

"We are working with Volunteer Wales on projects such as appointing a new volunteer coordinator, and we're actively trying to encourage more young women to join us. Some days our footplate crews are two-thirds female, but that is currently an exception rather than the norm. We've also had our first transgender volunteer start.

"I'm exploring options with Berwyn prison to work with ex-offenders and several other avenues for different demographics, but one thing we definitely want to do is to strengthen our youth group – in my eyes, if we're not passing the skills on to the next generation, what is the point of it all?

"We are a charity, and we have a responsibility to pass these skills on.

"At the moment, we have 38 people in the group, but you can expect to see that expand significantly. We'll also be taking on another two apprentices next year with Coleg Cambria in Deeside for this same reason. We've not had any apprentices for four or five years, and so I've been very keen to work with the engineering manager to reintroduce them.

"I was really impressed with how the East Lancashire Railway incorporates them when I visited recently, so I hope to replicate that here."

Society value

Having come from a background in transportation, Dave is acutely aware of how heritage lines are perceived by governing bodies around the country, as well as the value they can bring to local areas beyond the financial.

"I first got involved in transport in 1999 when I was elected onto Manchester City Council," he said. "Because I was the only councillor who got the bus to the meetings, I was appointed to the Transport Committee. Then, and even now, governments and councils cannot make their mind up as to if we are classed as a transport solution or a tourist attraction – personally, I think we sit somewhere in the middle – but there has certainly been a failure in this industry to lobby effectively, so there isn't the data that shows our worth. What data there is must be about 15 years old, so we could do with someone taking a lead to convince governments to take us more seriously. Prime Minister Andy Burnham may be very public transport orientated, but can't say I've yet heard him talk about heritage railways.

"Last year, Berwyn was voted the most



GWR pannier tank No. 7754 prepares to depart from Corwen station on August 21. The Llangollen Railway's extension here opened in 2023, and while it serves as a useful way of getting visitors to start their day here, where there is ample parking adjacent, manger Dave Hennigan says it still serves as a useful destination for those starting at Llangollen – although requires some improvements to accessibility.

beautiful station in the UK, which is great, but that does bring its own problems, primarily to do with parking. Local news outlets covered the congestion and parking nightmare in Berywn we had earlier this year when everyone wanted to visit Horseshoe Falls during the lovely spring weather. There are several other stunning landmarks and destinations, but they all have the same issue – there is nowhere to park.

"We've taken on the railbus from the Vintage Carriage Trust at Ingrow so we can eventually introduce a shuttle to move people from Llangollen, where there is more parking available, to Berwyn to help alleviate that. A total of 70% of our passengers come from outside the immediate area – possibly even more than that – so we can be a huge transport solution just as much as we are a tourist destination.

"Corwen has a car park next to the station, and it's been a great help to encourage people to start their visits from there, but we also don't want to forget everything the town itself has to offer, so we work with businesses there for those who travel up from Llangollen. Every Sunday, the community-run Owain Glyndwr Hotel cooks a roast lunch, so we worked a visit into that as part of our Real Ale train offering."

The coming years

There is much on the horizon for this line. In the workshops at Llangollen, GWR small prairie No. 5532 is rapidly advancing through its restoration and looks set to steam for the first time since 1962 within 18 months, subject to funding and all the other usual caveats, with the boiler nearing completion at Tyseley.

The owning group has raised a fair amount of the estimated balance required to cover the cost of finishing this former royal engine, but more money is always welcomed – find out more at www.5532.co.uk.

The overhaul of BR 4MT 2-6-4T No. 80078 is rapidly progressing, with completion expected not long after the prairie is due to enter service. Restoration of GWR 4-6-0 No. 5967 *Bickmarsh Hall* is also starting to progress now that the majority of its components are all at the railway; the front end of the locomotive's frames has recently been replaced using that from classmate *Maindy Hall* while restoration and acquisition of other smaller parts takes place in the background.

Just a short way up the line at Pentrefelin, the DMU group is maintaining the operational fleet of units that have more than proven their value to the railway (and will be the focus of their own feature next issue), while also undertaking restorations of other units to bolster the fleet.

The Llangollen Railway Suburban Group is also nearing the completion of its sixth BR Mk. 1 suburban carriage (Composite Lavatory No. 43034) and has set up an appeal to raise the £5000 it needs to reupholster the seat cushions in time for it to debut at next year's April 2-4 branch line gala. Those looking to support this can find out more by contacting Paul Bailey at paulbaileywincham@yahoo.co.uk or on 07745 223946.

As for running days, Dave has taken lessons learned from the past few years and will implement changes to get the best return.

"We are still working out our calendar for next year, but one thing I can say is that there will be more steam, including days with two locomotives running," he says.

"Having analysed the figures for the past few years, its clearer than ever that it is the star of the show, but that's not going to mean we ignore all other traction – our DMUs and diesels will still feature as they all have their own stories.

"The units in particular are very popular for their panoramic views of the valley. Visitors love them. We've even had to strengthen trains on some days because they've been so busy.

"We are also changing some of our operating days, such as no longer running on Fridays, which has been shown to be one of the quieter days of the week, perhaps because for accommodation in the area, it is typically a changeover day, so people are either leaving to go home or not in the area yet.

"We will be reaching out to more coach parties and other group booking avenues too."

➜ Pictures by Owen Hayward. HR



BR Mk. 1 TSO No. 4083 is on long-term loan from Locomotive Services Group and currently undergoing repairs in the carriage works. Once completed, it will give the railway another carriage with open bay seating for use on premium services such as afternoon tea on board its trains.



The eventual use of vehicles such as Waggon und Maschinenbau railbus No. 79962 on shuttles to Berywn to convey people to the adjacent Horseshoe Falls could help alleviate local parking problems, which Dave hopes will make the railway "a transport solution just as much as it is a tourist attraction."



Yet to run in preservation is small prairie No. 5532, which was once used on a Royal Train working. From this perspective it might look complete, but the boiler is at Tyseley, where it is nearing completion.



While the boiler of No. 5532 is off-site, that from classmate No. 5538 has been borrowed from Bill Parker to enable cladding and pipework to be made up and trial-fitted. Interestingly, components between these two locomotives were swapped during their time together at the Dean Forest Railway in the 1990s, and this could very well be No. 5532's previous boiler.

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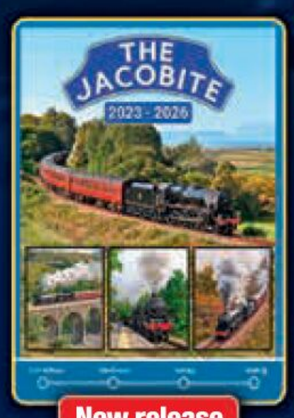
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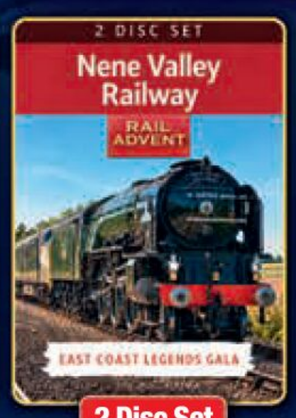
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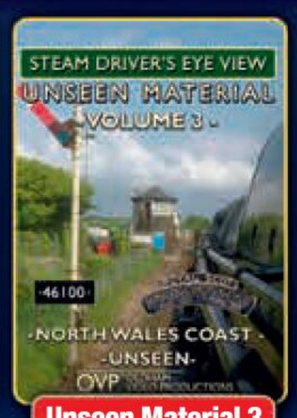
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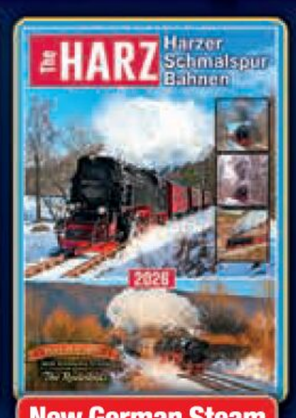
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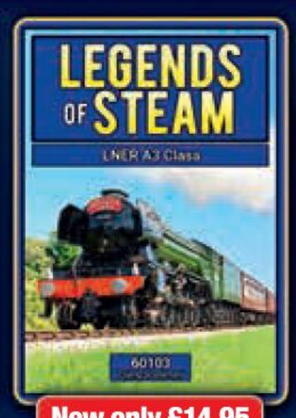
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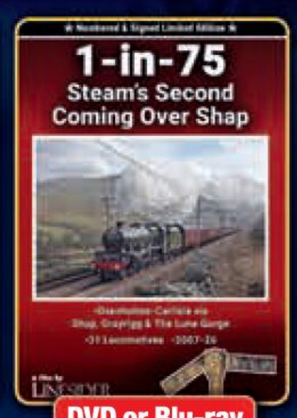
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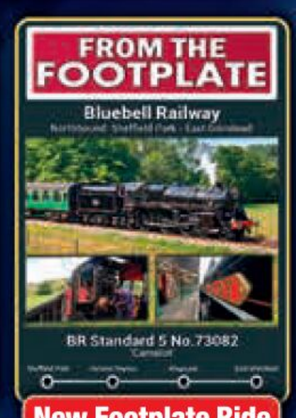
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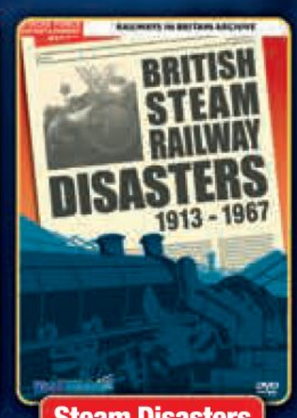
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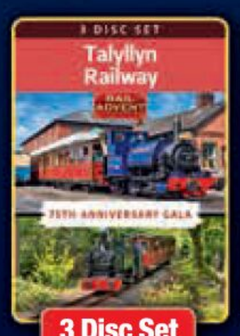
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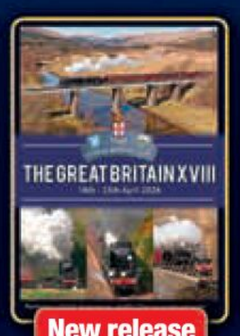
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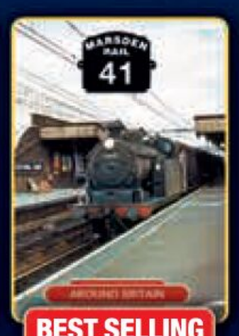
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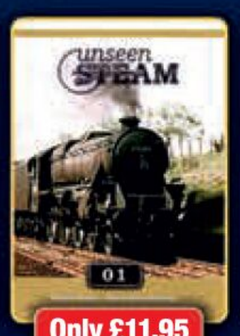
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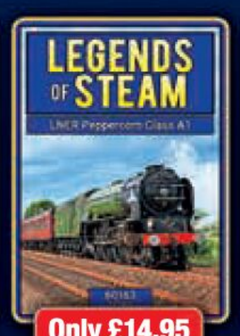
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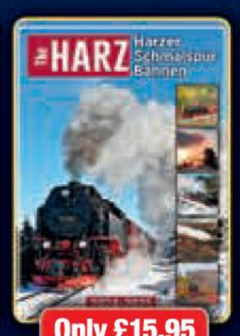
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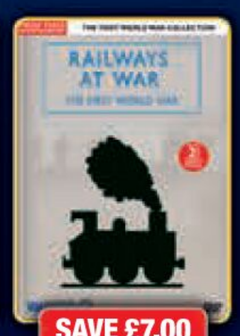
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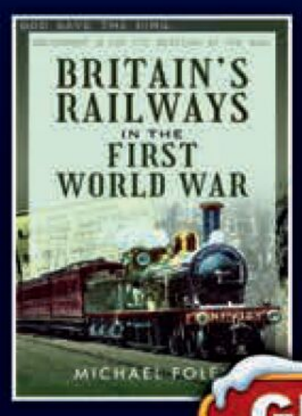
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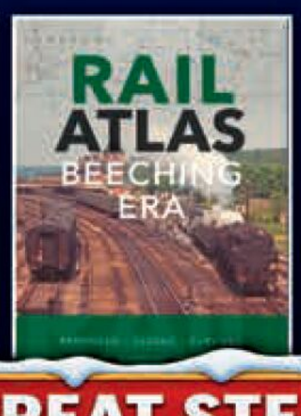


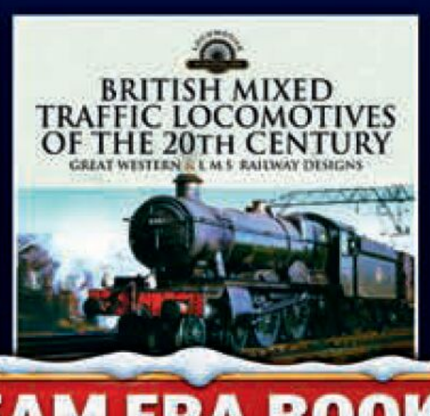
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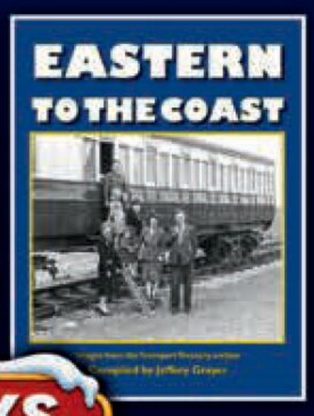


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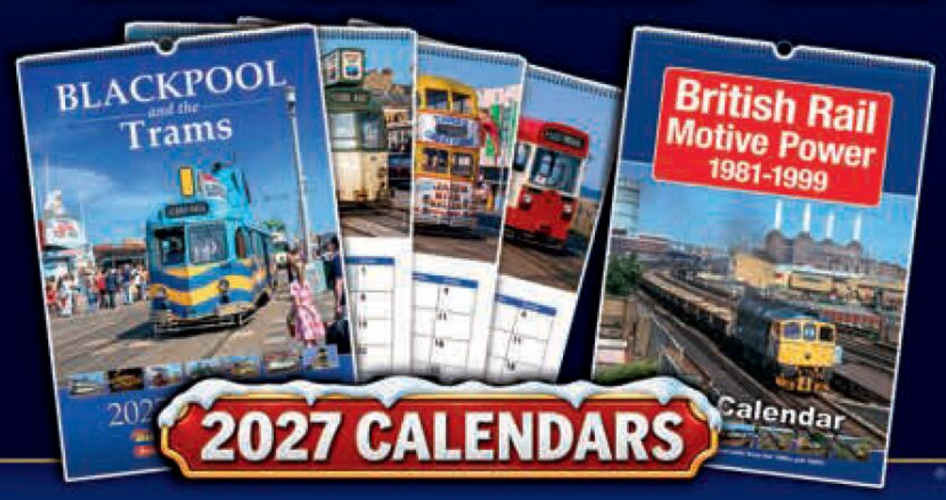








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SHOWCASING THE NATURE OF FREIGHT OPERATIONS

The wonderful aspect of the term 'heritage' is that it can apply to new areas as time progresses. In part two of this series looking at goods groups, **Owen Hayward** speaks to one looking at a different era of history, and finds out how another hopes to improve interpretation of such operations.

For some people, heritage means steam traction, to others diesels, and there are many for which electric multiple units fit the bill. As time marches ever on, what can be classified as 'heritage' continuously adapts – and freight wagons are no exception. While the steam era will likely continue to dominate our heritage railways, there is no reason to not look at preservation of rolling stock that came after, as this too will hold sentimental value for many. That was perhaps a part of the mantra of the National Wagon Preservation Group which in 2014 successfully preserved the first of its MGR coal hoppers.

An appeal had been made through memberships of the Class 56 and Class 58 groups when disposal of these started, and No. 355798 was acquired. Off the back of that, the NWPG was officially formed. To some, these wagons appear modern, but as group co-chair William Snook points out: "They were still being built in the 1960s as steam was phased out." He's also quick to highlight that it is a general wagon group, and not restricted to saving just the 'modern' types. "We don't really care – if it's important, we'll try to save it and find it a home."

Thanks to the efforts of both the NWPG and the Chasewater Railway, which combined in 2016 to form Project MGR, 10 of these hoppers have been preserved, including the first production MGR, No. 350002. These now reside at Brownhills West on what is a former colliery line. "Some people still snub wagons," Will said, "but they are such an important part of the railway story. Preserving them, though, is hard as they are understandably in some aspects not considered a priority. In order for them to be important, they have to offer something."

'Tanks' for the effort

Saving vehicles and then finding suitable homes has seen large rakes built up, mirroring sights that would have once been common on the national network. In addition to the MGRs at Chasewater, there is also a fleet of eight CDA hoppers resident at the Bodmin Railway – a rather appropriate home given the wagons' history as china clay carriers and the branch's link with such traffic – and 11 4-wheel TTA fuel tankers at the Dean Forest, which is also home to TEA bogie tanker No. 87867.

"These actually ran through the Forest of Dean when they were introduced, so it only made sense that we looked to take them there. We were initially approached towards the end of 2022 with an offer to home just the TTAs, but the conversation quickly moved towards taking the TEA too. Wagon leasing company VTG was starting to dispose of the last of its TTAs and we were

Class 50 No. 50042 passes Charlie's Gate on the Bodmin Railway with the NWPG's eight China Clay CDAs in tow on June 22, 2024. The train was run as a staff training service to build up familiarity with air-braked goods trains, something many lines won't have experience with as many run with vacuum-braked-only stock. JOHN HIRD



Class 14 D9551 pauses at Chasewater Heath with the NWPG's MGR coal hoppers. Used for coal traffic, their presence helps to tell this part of freight history and fit in to the Chasewater Railway's colliery history. MARTIN CREESE



Class 50s Nos. 50021 and 50008 top-and-tail the rake of TTA fuel tankers that reside on the Dean Forest Railway as part of the NWPG's Project Petroleum. TTAs were widespread when in use and many passed through the Forest of Dean, giving them a local connection to the heritage railway. ALFIE LANE/DEAN FOREST RAILWAY COLLECTION

initially offered one, which was accidentally scrapped after a paperwork blunder.

"However, we got in touch with Gascoigne Wood Yard, where the vehicles were being kept, and we soon had others identified. Our appeal was so successful that instead of four wagons, we ended up with 11, in part thanks to the late Roy Archdale, our Angel investor. They even arrived by rail, being delivered to Lydney on March 7, 2023."

Another project ongoing in the background is Project Railfreight, which looks to recreate the scene of BR's mixed traffic workings from the 1980s. Six vehicles currently make up this collection, including PDA No. 7459, VCA No. 200406 and VBA No. 200631. These types have practical uses as storage vehicles.

The first wagon acquired for this goal, however, was MHA No. 394001, a wagon introduced by EWS in 1997 carrying ballast, spoil and sand for engineering work. They were built on an MGR chassis which had seen the body cut off, giving new life to more than 1000 of these vehicles that would perhaps have otherwise been cut up. Nicknamed 'Coalfish' as a nod to their origins, their preservation tells another story in the history of wagon development.

General repository

While the group has currently focused on vehicles from the privatised era of rail history, Will said that it aims to be much more than that.

"We have diagrams and paperwork for all sorts of vehicles," he says, "and we very much hope to be a repository for wagon groups around the country. If you need to find out what a missing part is on something in your own collection or a specification to be worked to, we are here to help. We have an intranet with members of various groups signed up, which was started a few years ago after a wagon group open day was held where many of them came together. Through this we share requests for information, assistance and disposals - we are also here to help find wagons when they need new homes. In 2024, a fleet of VEA Vanwides was marked for scrapping at Marchwood depot, and we found homes for 10 of them.

"When we started out, we didn't have in mind the purpose of building rakes – we just wanted to save interesting things. The way it's gone has been a happy accident, but one that works in its favour. They look much better this way rather than as single vehicles."

Despite successful fundraisers to acquire the vehicles in its collection, the group is facing the challenges of manpower and money, something the entire sector is no stranger to. "We had a team of volunteers at Bodmin that started on the CDA hoppers, but that has currently fallen by the wayside. People's working lives have changed, some have moved away... it happens, and that's the world we live in now. The fleet is still usable, but the wagons are looking rather shabby, so we're crying out for volunteers at the moment.

"Fundraising is also difficult, and we've particularly struggled since the demise of the annual Warley Model Railway Club exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham. That was a huge earner for us. We've not really been able to get any big exposure for a few years, which is making things hard.

"Since starting up, we've put £15,000 into acquiring a whole stock of spare parts. Some might question why, but when we bought the wagons, we wanted to ensure their longevity, and part of that is ensuring we have the things we will need to keep them running long into the future.

"There was a long discussion had about how much we spend to save individual wagons and what we should spend on spares; we could have saved many more TTAs, but sometimes you need to let some go so they can keep others running. We had a very experienced and knowledgeable person called Andy Latham, who sadly died a few years ago, who knew where to get some of what we needed and could identify common components between vehicles, so we are in a good position there currently.

"What it has meant is that we are having to advance other work slowly while we build up the coffers. The VCA has been fully restored with a new roof and doors, while the TEA tanker is partway through a repaint into dove grey. That's an historic vehicle in its own right as it's the last surviving Class B bogie tank with the experimental FBT6 bogies fitted."

Will praised the forward thinking of the various railways with which the NWPG works, with mutually beneficial



As the railway became sectorised, freight operations passed into control of Railfreight. The NWPG is now looking to expand the collection of stories it tells by turning out vehicles in the relevant colours carried during this period of railway history. VALLEY RAIL PRESERVATION



It might look modern, but this 'Coalfish' wagon was built on the chassis of a MGR hopper that dated back to the 1960s. Part of the NWPH collection and homed at the Telford Railway, it continues to find a practical use as a ballast and spoil carrier as the line there is gradually extended. WILL SNOOK/NWPG



The largest vehicle in the NWPG's collection is No. 87867; it is the last surviving TEA tanker to be fitted with an experimental bogie type that was intended to improve the ride of freight vehicles. It is partway through a repaint, but more funds are required to complete the work and continue looking after all of the NWPG's stock. ADAM WILLIAMS/DFR COLLECTION

arrangements between them all ensuring vehicles find useful lives. "Some railways we approached at the start politely said no, and that's fine – we're keeping an open door and would be more than happy to work with them in future. I do think some railways have yet to realise the value of freight trains, though. They can be an excellent and cheap way of adding something more to driver experiences, and the fact our collection is largely made up of air-braked vehicles means that's a whole different experience to sell.

"What we do need is the general public to rethink their opinions of freight. And to those lines undecided about goods trains, I'd suggest talking to your members, see if it would suit you, and don't be afraid to reach out for help and ideas."

To find out more about and donate to the NWPG, visit www.nwpg.co.uk

The Mid-Hants Railway

Telling the story of freight is something that has been on the minds of quite a few people at heritage lines. Since the Great Central Railway's Railways at Work event in 2023 won the Heritage Railway Association's Interpretation Award, it feels like it has created a template for other lines to base similar activities on.

Earlier this year, the Goods and Parcels Group was established at the Mid-Hants Railway by a group of like-minded individuals keen to see such activities demonstrated there. "The idea came after our operations assistant, George Streather, saw what other lines were doing," says Theo Williams, one of the group's members. "We wanted to first bring to life the feeling of the 1950s and 1960s during galas and special events, which started out as simply giving the platform staff parcels to move on and off trains, but it has grown from there."

At most of the railway's steam galas for the last few years, members of the group have donned the guise of goods porters and engaged with parcel loading activities, travelling with relevant workings along the line and bringing a bit of atmosphere in the process. On June 13 this year, the group featured more prominently when the freight train was incorporated into the Retro Wheels and Rails weekend, the MHR's annual weekend that steps back through time at each station.



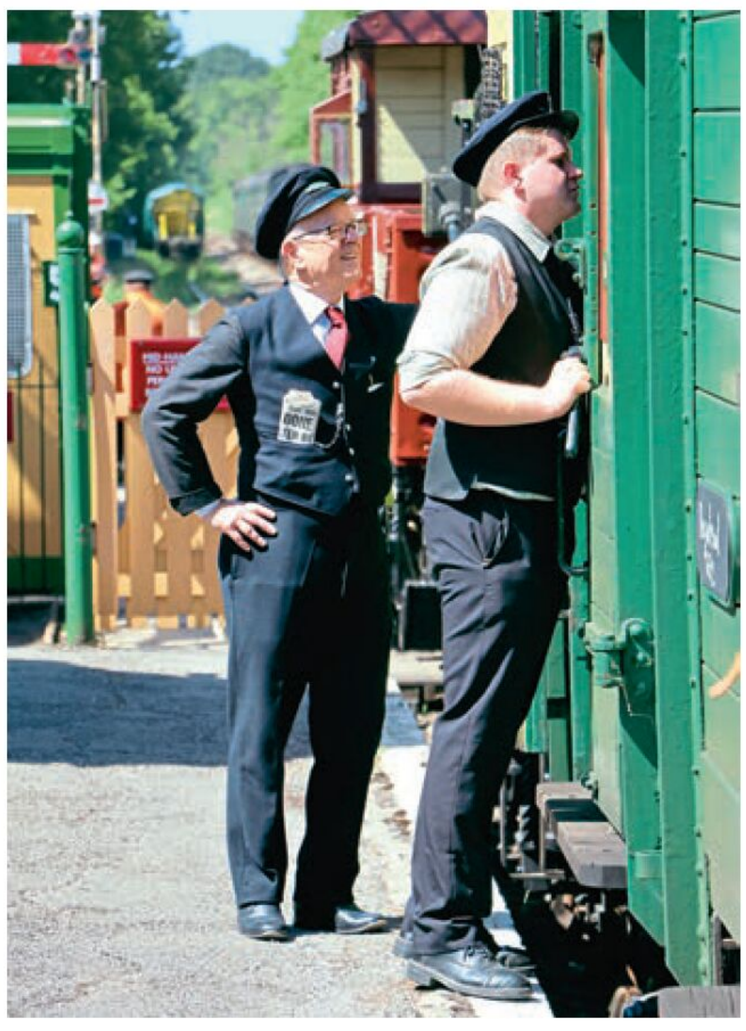
Visiting for the spring steam gala in April 2025, LYR No. 52322 arrives at Medstead with a demonstration freight train. The vehicle immediately behind the locomotive may look like a typical box van, but it was designed to carry fresh meat and has four vents down each end of the vehicle. OWEN HAYWARD

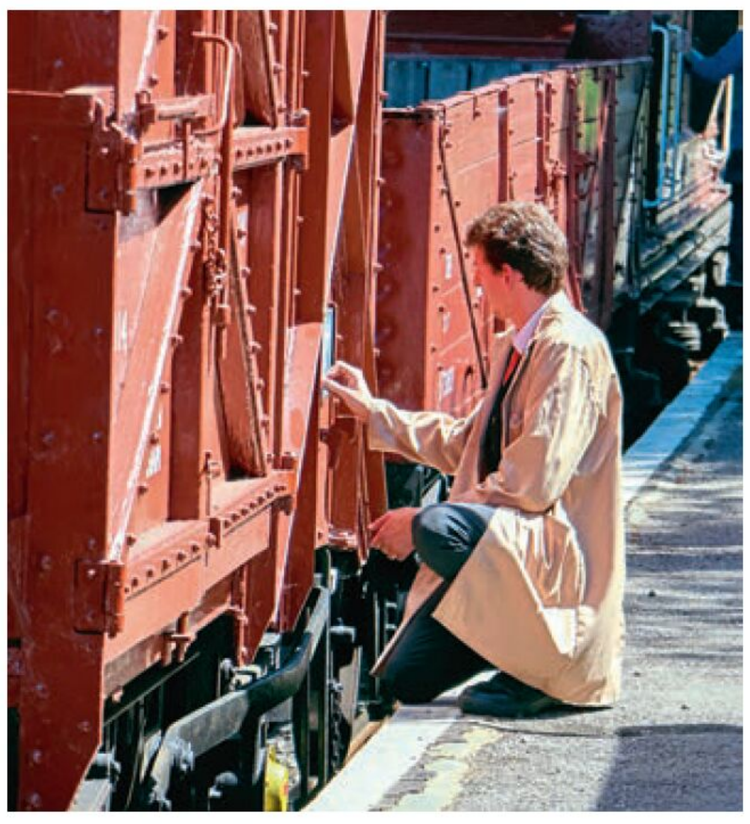
Over the winter, parcel-wrapping sessions took place to prepare boxes for use in this, with replica labels made up and stuck on, and then put into wagons and at stations. On the day itself, volunteers again travelled up and down with the train, which had long layovers at Medstead & Four Marks, Alresford and Alton stations, during which reenactment activities took place, not only moving parcels on and off vehicles, but also barrels, mailbags, luggage and more.

"That day was a trial to see if what we had in mind would actually work, and it seemed to do so quite well," says Theo. "We have a false wall in one van that would be 'inspected' during layovers, another van full of parcels that would be sorted, and a wagon which we are gradually filling with oil barrels when the locomotive department have emptied them at Ropley. Some of us would also demonstrate wheeltapping, whereby the wagon wheels are struck with a hammer and the resulting sound is an indication of whether the wheels had cracks in them; others would change wagon cards and chalkboard destinations so that it always felt like something was going on.

"We hope to bring this activity to more events at the railway just to add to the sense of occasion. In my opinion, for us right now, this works better as an addition rather than being run as its own separate thing, but that might change in time. What we could really benefit from is not only more people joining us to help with the actual execution of these demonstrations, but also donations of things we can use during them... suitable luggage, oil barrels, milk churns – anything that can be loaded on and off of the trains that is of the period we're representing.

"The railways were – and still are – common carriers, so it could more or less be absolutely anything."





On June 13, the Goods and Parcels Group featured at the Retro Wheels and Rails event, travelling with the freight set during the day and performing reenactments of related duties during stops at stations along the line. BOTH: JAMES TAVINER

Restoration revival

The MHR's collection of freight stock began back in the 1970s. Just like at many other lines, all it took was some like-minded people to suggest the idea of a goods train and acquire wagons as they became available. It wasn't until the 1980s that a group to take on their care was actually established.

"A man called Nigel Hanwell started off looking after them in the yard at Medstead & Four Marks," explained current wagon group chairman Chirs Le Corney. "Aided by three or four others, he set to overhauling wagons, and the railway was able to put on its first demonstration freight trains. Some time in the 1990s, he had to drop out because he was struggling to commit the time required, and the group stagnated.

"It was revived in about 2005 with me and a former Bluebell Railway volunteer,



The Merchant Navy class locomotives might have been better associated with express passenger workings, but they did occasionally work freight too. On April 26, 2026, No. 35005 *Canadian Pacific* approaches Ropley with an unadvertised goods working to position the freight set ahead of a photo charter the following day. OWEN HAYWARD

Chris Willis, but has since grown to about 40 members with a core of regulars. Our activities are split between two locations: those at Medstead do more of the heavy refurbishment work, while at Alton, we take on more of the cosmetic jobs such as repaints, but we do come together to discuss projects and allocate them to where certain skills are – or even which group has the time.

"The group is entirely self-funded. We raise money from sales stands at galas and model railway shows, and we have annually commissioned an exclusive wagon from Dapol which features a coal merchant that would have been local to one of our stations.

"We do occasionally get big donations, too; we have a SECR Dance Hall brake van at Ropley, where the workshop staff are taking care of the metalwork for us, after which it can go to Alton, where the bodywork will be rebuilt. We received a donation towards the cost of the wood for that project a few years ago, so we are excited to see that done. Ian Harwood, head of the carriage works, gives us lots of advice too, which is often a great help.

"Obviously, many of our wagons are now approaching 60 years old, so the fleet requires constant attention. We have had to part with a few vehicles that are beyond our current resources and there are others currently waiting for more in-depth repairs; maintaining the brake gear is one of our big tasks, which includes removing, overhauling and refitting vacuum cylinders – no easy task. Keeping them looking fresh is also like painting the Forth Bridge, and the box vans usually need redoing every four or five years."

Chris said that the railway is therefore unlikely to look at acquiring new wagons, instead concentrating on what it has. "There is a SR box van we are keen to overhaul – all the timber on that needs replacing, and a couple of containers to do, which can then go onto some of the wagons as a load."

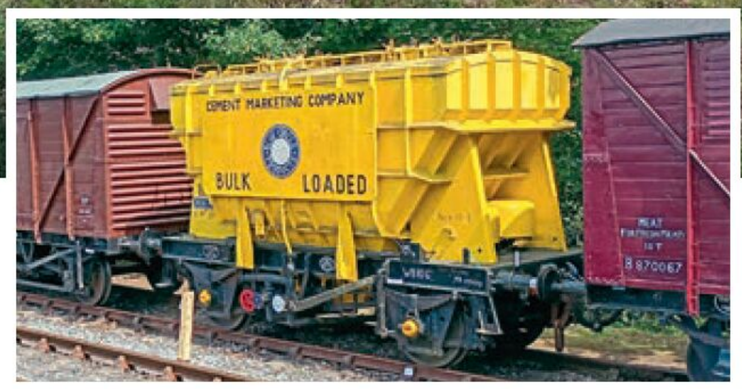
Ingenuity

One item that Chris said the group did want in its collection was a cattle van, however: "Very few of those survived, and the ones that did seldom come up for sale. A few years ago, a conversion of an ex-LMSR box van was undertaken which saw it become a SR-style cattle van. It's not 100% accurate as the type it alleges to be had a 10ft 6in wheelbase and this one is 10ft, but it looks aesthetically right and, more importantly, it fills that gap we had. It's currently one of the vehicles stopped for repairs, with some of the woodwork in need of replacement, but it won't be too long before its back in the running rake."

The railway's collection is quite varied and a prime example of how simple types had numerous differences. Among the box van designs are LMSR, SR and BR sorts, including the sole-surviving ventilated meat van, which had four vents down each end of the vehicle to keep produce fresh while in motion – these would have been regularly used on workings between Southampton and Nine Elms, so its presence on the MHR is regionally appropriate.

There are also some unusual sorts, such as Presflo No. PF29. Built for carrying cement powder, this type gained recognition for the vibrant yellow livery applied by Blue Circle Products. Wagons tended to operate together in long rakes, but only a handful survive in preservation and all at different railways. "The yellow also makes it unpopular with photographers," Chris said. "We first restored it in 2009, but they didn't want it in the rake during photo charters, so it got taken out and left aside. The brakes on this one in particular can stop working if it doesn't get used. We've since refreshed it, and it is back running again.

"I don't think we'd look to build a rake of them, though – we don't have the space at the railway for it or the manpower to maintain one. We are focusing more on that typical 1950s-1960s era of trains that would have run over the Mid-Hants route." HR



The vibrant yellow livery of Blue Circle Product makes Presflo cement hopper No. PF29 stand out from the rest of the collection; although better known for running in long rakes with matching wagons, some would often run in small numbers in mixed trains in the 1960s. CHRIS LE CORNEY/MHR



The Goods and Parcels Group hope to demonstrate more activity at events in future. During a photo charter on March 11, 2026, porters pose with parcels being loaded onto a Mk. 1 carriage, showing it wasn't just freight stock that conveyed goods. STEPHEN MORLEY



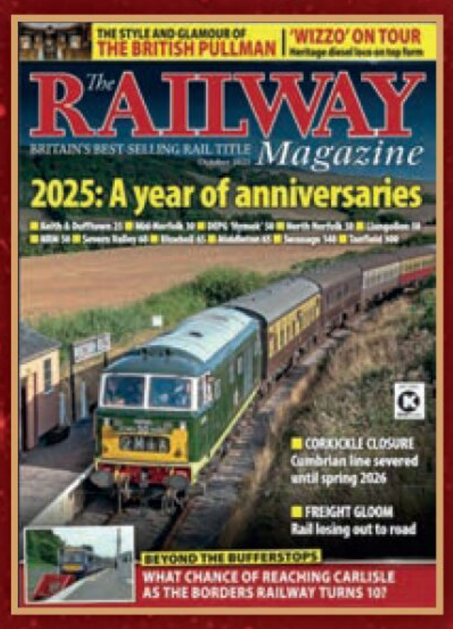
What do you do if a wagon you seek no longer exists? For the MHR wagon group, the answer was to modify another. Based on a SR Bulleid-designed vehicle, No. 53845 was made out of ex-LMSR van No. 514791. CHRIS LE CORNEY/MHR

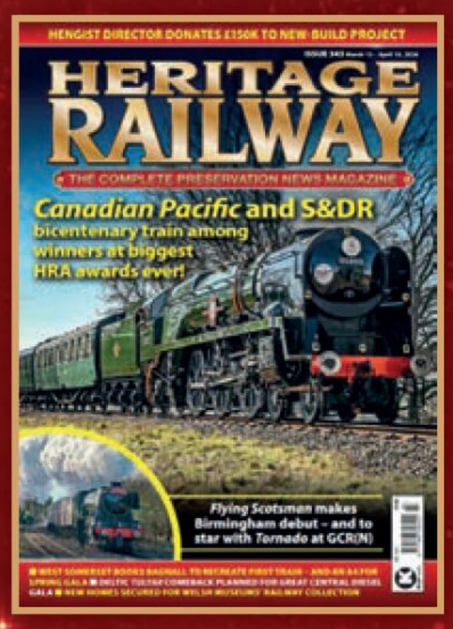
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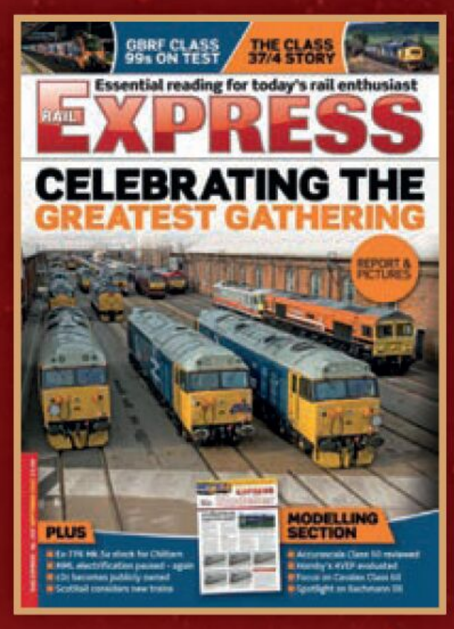
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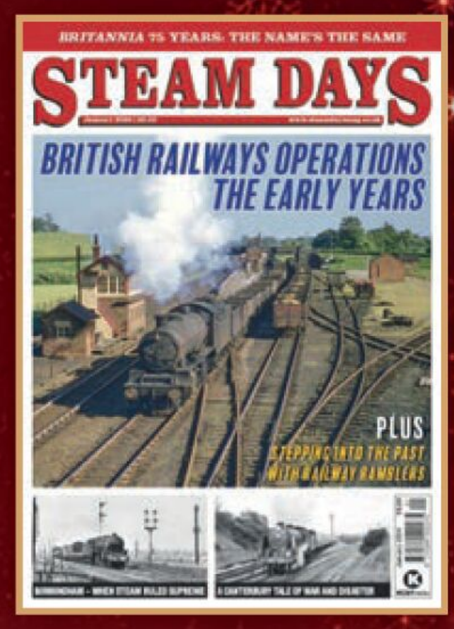
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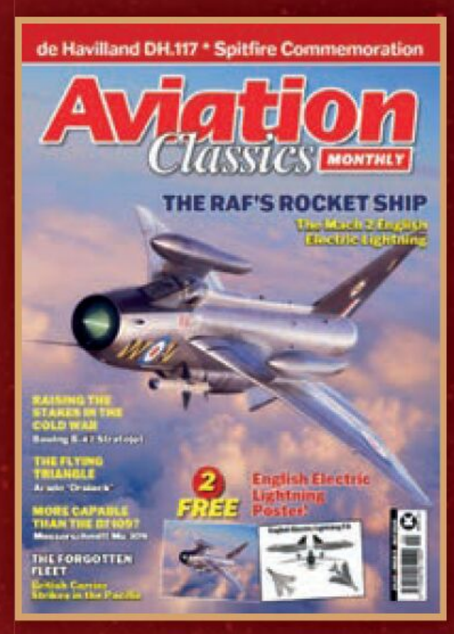










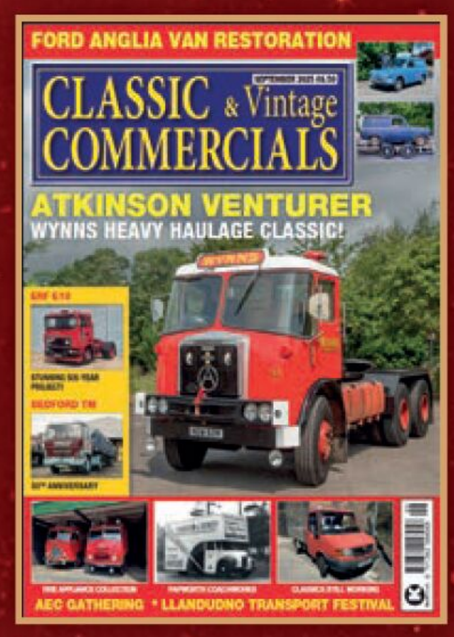














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REMEMBERING MOUNTAIN ASH



Cosmetically smartened up for the occasion, Avonside *Sir John* was on static display outside the carriage sheds during the gala. GRAHAM NUTTALL

More than 40 years after it closed, four locomotives once found side by side at a South Wales colliery came together for one weekend at the Blaenavon Railway in South Wales, as **Owen Hayward** details.

Nestled in the Cynon Valley in the Borough of Rhondda Cyon Taf, Mountain Ash was, like many of the Welsh Valleys, a hive of activity when it came to coal mining. The Taff Vale Railway reached the town in 1888, while the Mountain Ash Railway was developed from an early tramway to connect the collieries in the area.

The MAR started at Afon Cynon at the Penrikyber Colliery, from where it headed north past a coal-stocking area at Pontcynon, then an interchange yard and through the former Nixon's Navigation colliery – home of the railway's central workshops, locomotive sheds and weighbridge – and on north, past Duffryn Colliery, terminating at the Abercwmboi Phurnacite plant.

The railway's main access to the UK rail network was at the Vale of Neath Railway's station at Mountain Ash (Cardiff Road) station, but it also had access to the competing Taff Vale Railway.

It eventually ended up under the control of the National Coal Board, later becoming the last steam-hauled, non-privatised line in the UK. It was operated by many different locomotives; a good number of which were in service at the time of its closure on September 21, 1979, have survived into preservation.

For its annual steam gala on September 25-27, the Blaenavon Heritage Railway opted to revisit its Industrial Steam of South Wales theme, which was last used at its 2011 event, and brought together four of those surviving locomotives on another ex-colliery line – which conveniently sits just a few miles to the north-east.

Back to the south

Headlining the roster was GWR 5700 0-6-0PT No. 7754, making its second trip away from its Llangollen home since its most recent overhaul was completed. Built in Glasgow by the North British Locomotive Company in 1930, it had a successful GWR and BR career before it was withdrawn from service, along with many other smaller locomotives. BR sold it to the NCB, and it was duly dispatched to Talywain Colliery; after a few short months, it was transferred to Mountain Ash and saw out the remainder of its career there. Crews at the colliery were purportedly not fond of it, having a firebox designed for main line duties compared to the industrial sorts many were used to, while the locomotive allegedly had a tendency to lose parts and wreak havoc with the track.

Footplateman Howard Griffiths, a former GWR fitter, kept the Pannier tank running for as long as he could, but No. 7754's NCB life ended in 1975 – no doubt to the relief of many of the crews – when a loose piston caused a cylinder cover to blow off. The NCB was persuaded to donate the locomotive to the National Museum of Wales, which in turn placed it on loan with the embryonic Llangollen Railway. After a lengthy overhaul, it finally steamed again in 1993, and ownership was later transferred in full to the Llangollen Railway Trust.

Meanwhile, Vulcan Foundry-built Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 3879 *Haulwen* ventured over to Blaenavon from the Gwili Railway – the first time it has left its home line since its owen overhaul was completed last year.

Built in 1945 for the War Department and sent to the Central Ordnance Depot at Barby, near Rugby, it was one of several locomotives that ended up on the Longmoor Military Railway, in Hampshire. Bought by the Hunslet Engine Company in 1961, it was then sold again that same year to the NCB, and after spending time at the Cambrian and Garw collieries, it finally arrived at Mountain Ash in July 1979 – just a few months before the pit was closed (although the washing plant remained active for a while longer; activities there finally ceased in 1980).

Former NCB Mountain Ash shedmates line up on September 26. From left to right: *Sir John, Haulwen, Llantarnam Abbey* and No. 7754. BHR



The pair joined BHR resident locomotives Andrew Barclay 0-6-0ST No. 2074 *Llantarnam Abbey* and Avonside 0-6-0ST No. 1680 *Sir John*. The former was returned to service earlier this year and spent its whole working life on the MAR after being outshopped in 1939. Interestingly, after it was sent to the NCB's Walkden workshops in Lancashire for repairs in 1971, it was returned to the colliery with the name misspelled as *Llantanam Abbey*, the error that remained until at least July 1975.

Sir John (built 1914), meanwhile, was one of 59 locomotives of Avonside's B3 class built between 1909 and 1926; almost half of these were to work the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board Railway in Liverpool, but this particular example went straight to the coalfields. By 1975, it had been withdrawn but remained stored at Mountain Ash until being sold to the Taff Vale Railway Society in May 1981. Six years later, it was bought by the Vale of Neath Railway Society, which first took it to the Gwili Railway in 1994, and then the Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway in 2011. In 2015, a 99-year lease was signed with the BHR that includes the restoration of the locomotive, it not yet having steamed since being withdrawn.

Fresh look

Ahead of the gala, *Sir John* was given a cosmetic refresh which included replica name and worksplates being fitted, cast from the originals that have recently been found. The locomotive's original safety valve cover was also fitted, albeit in an unpolished state, and the corrugated sheet roof (gained while stored at the Gwili) was removed, with the smart locomotive on static display during the event.

On the Saturday morning, the railway took the opportunity to line up all four ex-Mountain Ash locomotives together for a once-in-a-lifetime photoshoot outside the carriage shed to showcase the variety of types that could once be found working the MAR system.

No. 2074 was not the only recently overhauled Andrew Barclay running at the gala; while not a locomotive with Mountain Ash links, 0-4-0ST No. 2201 *Victory* very much fits into the South Wales steam theme; outshopped in 1945, it spent its whole industrial life at the Newport plant of Stewart & Lloyds steel company. Much like No. 7754, it was acquired by the National Museum for Wales upon its retirement, stored at the Gwili Railway, and donated to the BHR in 2014. Now privately owned, it was taken to the West Somerset Railway for contract overhaul which has included a rebuilt cab and water tank, addition of a full-width bunker and extensive boiler repairs. After returning to Blaenavon in August for running-in, whereafter its final livery was applied, the gala marked the first time it has pulled trains since being preserved.

Completing the line-up of six locomotives was Hunslet 0-6-0ST No. 1873 *Jessie*, another ex-steelworks locomotive which, after having been built in 1937, spent its whole working life at the East Moors plant in Cardiff.

Huge success

The theme of the gala turned out to be a recipe for success. BHR director Alex Hinshelwood said: We certainly didn't expect to wait 15 years between Industrial Steam in South Wales galas. With *Llantarnam Abbey*'s overhaul scheduled to be completed this summer, it made sense to try and get No. 7754 from Llangollen. Our event is traditionally held in the second weekend in September, and has been since 2010, but this unfortunately clashed with the LR's own gala weekend, so our scheduling was born from the availability of the pannier.

"We had hoped for Bagnall 0-6-0ST No. 401 *Vulcan,* as that has been on the wish list for some time, but it has suffered some boiler issues at home in Tyneside.

"However, at about the same we fixed No. 7754 in the line-up, we saw that fellow Mountain Ash stablemate *Haulwen* had returned to traffic at the Gwili Railway in its striking lime green livery. *Haulwen* has never worked anywhere else since being preserved, so a few phone calls later, the locomotive was booked.

"The reunion of the four locomotives was special, for sure, and the fact No. 7754 spent time at Blaensychan was also a coup.

"We carried an amazing 755 passengers over the weekend, with 10% of those enjoying a yard tour as an extra. Revenue was also good, with all areas doing well. Alongside enthusiasts and families, we welcomed a number of people who had worked at Mountain Ash, recounting stories of days gone by, which was lovely to hear." HR



Making its first trip away from the Gwili in preservation, *Haulwen* climbs the steep gradient towards Furnace Sidings with the coal hoppers and mineral wagons in tow. ADAM ASHFORD





Above: Andrew Barclay duo Nos. 2201 *Victory* and 2079 *Llantarnam Abbey* put on a show as they climb away from Blaenavon High Level. GRAHAM NUTTALL

Left: GWR 5700 No. 7754 starts away from Furnace Sidings with a four-coach rake on September 26. ADAM ASHFORD

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Visiting GWR 2-8-0 3850 on the Great Western set crosses Oldbury Viaduct after departing Bridgnorth on September 19.

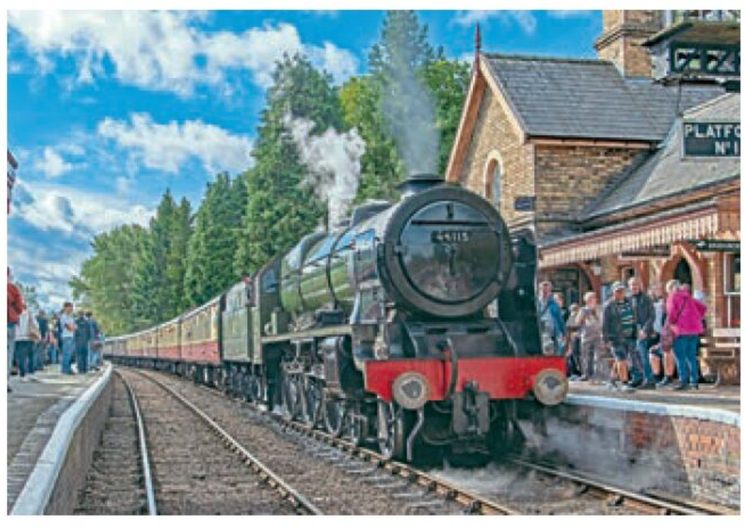


No. 4150 runs along Tenbury Wall with a freight working after departing Bewdley on September 17.

"Our Autumn Steam Gala was an outstanding success, with excellent customer feedback..."



LMS 2-6-2T No. 41313 tops Eardington Bank on a SVR/30742 Charters run on September 16.



No. 46115 proved very popular during the gala, seen here at Hampton Loade on September 19.

Right: No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman* departs Kidderminster Town with the morning service to Bridgnorth on September 20.

SAVIOURS OF THE SEVERN VALLEY GALA

Two last-minute guest locomotives, booked as replacements for a pair which had to pull out, boosted attendance for the Severn Valley Railway's Autumn Steam Gala, reports **John Titlow** in words and pictures.

The Severn Valley Railway's Autumn Steam Gala, which took place on September 17-20, has to be one of the major highlights of the preservation year, but things did not go according to the initial plan.

Organising a steam gala can be extremely difficult, and this is not helped when visiting locomotives become unavailable at short notice before the event. Due to unforeseen circumstances, BR Standard 4MT 2-6-T No. 80097, from the East Lancashire Railway, and GWR small prairie No. 5526, from the South Devon Railway, could not make it, and the stops were pulled out to find replacements.

Stepping into the breach, West Coast Railways despatched LMS 4-6-0 No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman*, which visited the SVR last year, and the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway sent GWR 2-8-0 No. 3850. The timetable was already written to match locomotives with the appropriate stock, so a change of traction meant that this had to be rewritten to cater for the changes. Much work was done behind the scenes to make the event a spectacular success.

One issue of major concern was fire risk where the lineside was tinder-dry following a hot summer. A special spray train was assembled to dampen the lineside during the event, and that train did go out, but after recent rainfall, its services were not actually needed.

Ten steam locomotives ran throughout the gala. From the home fleet were GWR 0-4-2T No. 1450, 0-6-0ST No. 813, 2-6-2T No. 4150 and 0-6-0PT No. 7714, BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 75069 and LMS 2-6-0 No. 13268, the latter appearing just before it undergoes work for main line running. In action alongside them were visitors Nos. 3850, No. 46115, 0-6-0PT No. 9681 and Ivatt 2-6-2T 41313 making its first-ever appearance at the SVR courtesy of the Isle of White Steam Railway.

The general theme was to look back at trains that once plied Severn Valley metals including double-headed panniers; No. 9681, visiting from the Dean Forest, made a perfect visitor, especially when paired with classmate No. 7714 to recreate that historic working.

The gala marked a momentous occasion for the SVR with the debut in service of





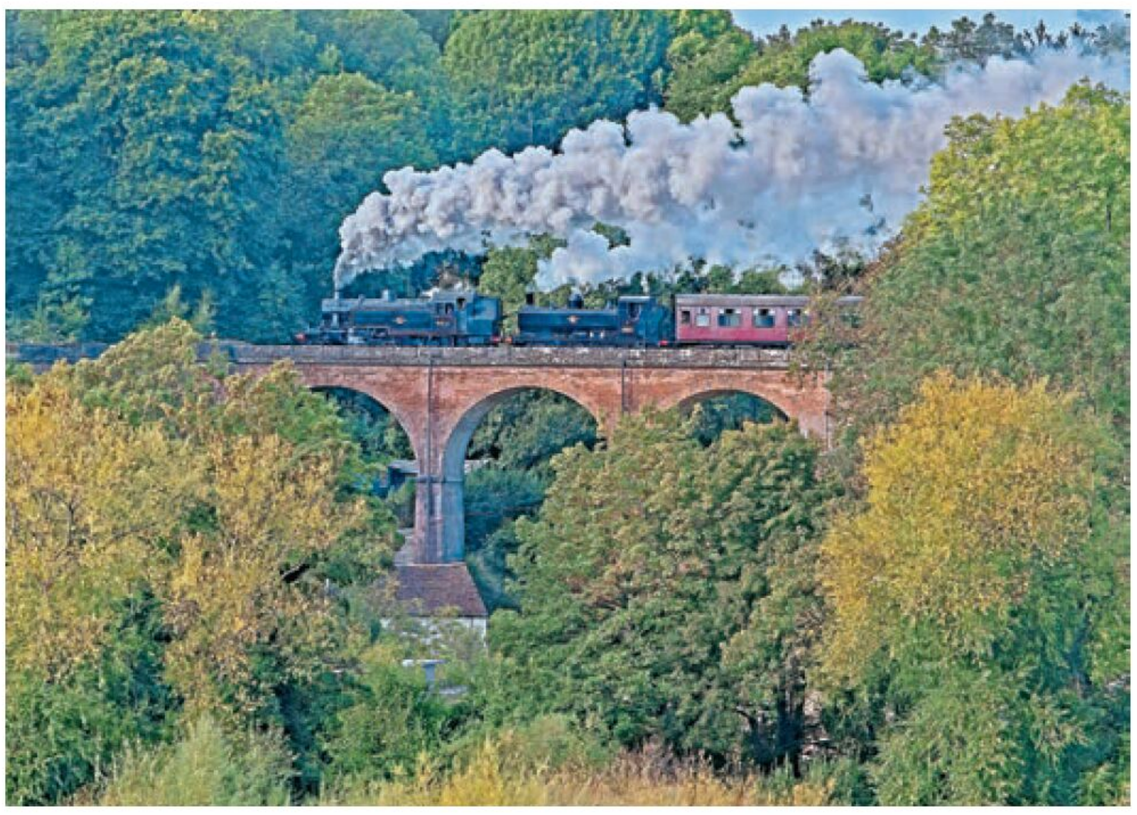
Replicating one of the last BR services prior to closure in 1963, pannier No. 9681 pilots sister No. 7714 past Little Rock in the pouring rain on September 18.



No. 46115 *Scots Guardsman* makes light work of Eardington Bank on September 17.



Gala debutant GWR prairie No. 4150 departs Bewdley with its first official passenger train after overhaul, bound for Bridgnorth with the Great Western set in tow on September 17.



With colours subtly changing to autumn hues, guests Nos.41313 and 9684 cross Oldbury Viaduct after departing Bridgnorth on September 20.

newly-restored GWR prairie No. 4150. Its appearance also represents the culmination of an extraordinary restoration journey and a significant milestone for the 4150 Fund.

No. 4150 was the last unrestored ex-Barry scrapyard locomotive at the SVR, and its return to traffic came 61 years after it was withdrawn from British Railways service in 1965. Interestingly, on one side it had the GWR shirt button logo and on the other a similar one but with SVR lettering. Next year it will be repainted into a full GWR livery.

A variety of double-headers ran on passenger stock with Nos. 813+4150, 7714+4150, 41313+9681, 1450+9681 and 7714+41313. The final steam-hauled passenger train before closure in 1963 was behind panniers No. 9624 and 4665, so it was fitting for Nos. 7714 and 9681 to replicate this run, complete with headboard. Sadly, it poured with rain when they ran.

The Great Western goods train ran over the four days, hauling 15 wagons with an additional brake van at each end to save marshalling time. Motive power was varied, with Nos. 4150, 9681, 3850, 813 and 13268 each having a go.

No. 1450 ran in auto-sandwich mode and with a single coach for variety. It mainly provided shuttles between the various stations, though it did complete several full line workings. Generally, it was well loaded.

Timekeeping overall was very good, with occasional minor delays, but these were made up due to allowances of recovery time programmed in.

There were two very minor failures that did not affect the timetable: No. 41313 suffered a small fault, missing one turn, and No. 813's brick arch collapsed but was rebuilt at Bewdley. Every other locomotive performed faultlessly, and they were a credit to all involved.

First and last trains from Kidderminster were Thursday at 7.10am and 8.35pm, Friday at 8.25am and 9.35pm, Saturday at 8.30am and 9.20pm and Sunday at 8am and 6.30pm. From Bridgnorth, it was Thursday at 8.50am and 7pm, Friday at 8am and 9.55pm, Saturday at 8am and 9.55am and Sunday at 7.45am and 7pm. There was no overnight running this year.

The weather was generally kind, apart from Friday when it rained, and autumnal colours were starting to appear in the valley after the very dry summer. From the lineside, trains looked very busy, and *Scots Guardsman* had a leak with its drain cocks. To confuse matters, Nos. 7714 and 9681 were turned for the Sunday, plus Nos. 3850 and 41313 for the Saturday.

Leading up to the event, the SVR's chief executive officer, Gus Dunster, said: "The past few days have kept everyone on their toes, but what the team has achieved is quite remarkable. The additions of *Scots Guardsman* and No. 3850 give our gala an even greater range and variety, and we are grateful to everyone who has gone above and beyond."

No. 46115 also worked the weekend after the gala on normal service trains.

Despite the SVR autumn gala being the biggest event taking place around Bridgnorth, Shropshire Council decided to instigate road closures in the area around the station for roadworks.

The SVR's head of commercial and customer experience, Victoria Evans, said: "Our gala was an outstanding success, with excellent customer feedback, including from a family of four from Sydney who planned their three-week European holiday around the event!

"Ticket sales were slightly below budget, but this was offset by strong secondary spend, particularly in food and beverage. Thank-you to the organising committee and everyone involved across the weekend for making the event such a success."

Duncan Ballard, head of steam engineering, added: "A big well done and thank-you to the engineering team for the delivery of the Autumn Steam Gala.

"Apart from a temporary issue with No. 41313 on Thursday morning which was soon resolved and a small issue with No. 813, the fleet behaved over four intensive days of operating."

Half term running will take place between October 24 to November 1. As reported in News, page 32, festive services start on November 28 and run until December 24, with the usual post-Christmas trains followed by the Winter Gala on January 2/3. HR

GREEN LIGHT FOR OVERNIGHT STAYS AT HEBDEN BRIDGE SIGNALBOX

Repurposing a Victorian signalbox has preserved it for future generations to enjoy. **Sally Clifford** talks to those who have navigated this ambitious project to completion.

For those seeking an unusual destination to stay, Hebden Bridge signalbox provides the perfect location.

Refashioned over the past few months into a bijoux trackside breakaway, its position makes it perfectly placed for railway enthusiasts and, not forgetting, the influencers who will be clamouring to capture their experiences of a signalbox stay to share with followers online.

Ahead of the opening on September 19, when invited dignitaries and guests got their first glimpse of the culmination of several months of hard work by the dedicated team of volunteers responsible for steering this ambitious project to completion, along with Halifax-based contractors West End Joiners and Builders Ltd, *Heritage Railway* was given a preview.

By contrast, it was on a cold and dreary day last December when I initially met the team, assembled with clipboards and ready to undertake the necessary tasks after getting the keys to this historic property located across the tracks from the beautifully preserved Hebden Bridge station in this funky textile town framed by the Rochdale Canal.

Originally built by the Lancashire & Yorkshire and standing close to Platform 1, this Grade-II listed structure was saved by a collaborative community effort. In 2018, after the building became surplus to requirements when signalling on the Calder Valley line was modernised, the Friends of Hebden Bridge Station was keen to prevent it falling into dereliction and, with the support of Calder Valley Community Land Trust, a social housing provider caring for community assets in the Upper Calder Valley, the group secured a grant from Hebden Royd Town Council, which funded the services of local architect Jacquie Milham.

Subsequent grants from the Railway Heritage Trust and the National Lottery Heritage Fund helped to bring the project to reality following the securing of a 21-year lease from Network Rail. Work began in June, taking about three months to complete. "The project was probably the smallest we have taken on for some time, an enjoyable yet challenging task encompassing a great deal of detail and some imaginative design ideas in such a small space," said Paul Martin, construction director of West End Joiners & Builders Ltd.

The company is more than familiar with railway-related projects, having completed the remodelling and refurbishment of the old ticket office at neighbouring Mytholmroyd station.

"As a local business ourselves, employing local people, we have direct connections with the wider Calder Valley area and it's great that we can be involved in some way that benefits the local community," he added.

Touring the site with Karin Lowson, trustee and treasurer of the CVCLT, the Locking Room, with its view of the workings of the original LYR lever frame above, now preserved behind glass panels, has been fitted out with a bunk bed, toilet and washing facilities. Upstairs, a kitchen area has been incorporated within the space where the original signalling equipment has been retained, alongside a showcase of railway artefacts including the original desk, which has been in storage at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, and a Westminster chimes mantle clock presented to Walter Terry, stationmaster at Hebden Bridge, from staff and friends at the station on his retirement. The clock has been in the safekeeping of Diana Monahan who, for many years, has been collecting and documenting items of historical interest for the Friends.

Diana has now taken on a similar role as a member of the Hebden Bridge Signal Box Heritage Group, which has been instrumental in helping to guide this project to fruition. "Somebody emailed the Friends and said their ancestor had this clock, which was given to him as a retirement present, and would we be interested in having it? I said I was sure we could put it somewhere," said Diana.

The intention was to put it in the 'box once the restoration had taken place. "It wasn't working, so I put it on the bookcase by my computer. A few years went by and an email about the 'box arrived... and it started chiming!" she said. "It went for a few hours, but it was fast. Then I carried it here, to the Hebden Bridge 'box, put it down, and it started chiming again."

A pair of beautiful hand-knitted black and white cats she has created – based on Cat and his fellow feline friend who once lived at the 'box – will entertain young visitors.

Exhibition boards will bring the working history of the signalbox and all those who served there to life.



The repurposed Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Hebden Bridge signalbox.



Karin Lowson, trustee and treasurer of the Calder Valley Community Land Trust; Paul Martin, construction director at West End Joiners and Builders Ltd; Andy Woodhead, of West End Joiners and Builders Ltd; Hannah Nadim, trustee of the Calder Valley Community Land Trust; and Diana Monahan, of the Hebden Bridge Signal Box Heritage Group with knitted versions of the original signalbox cats created by Diana.



The original lever frame and signalling equipment will help to educate visitors about its past purpose.



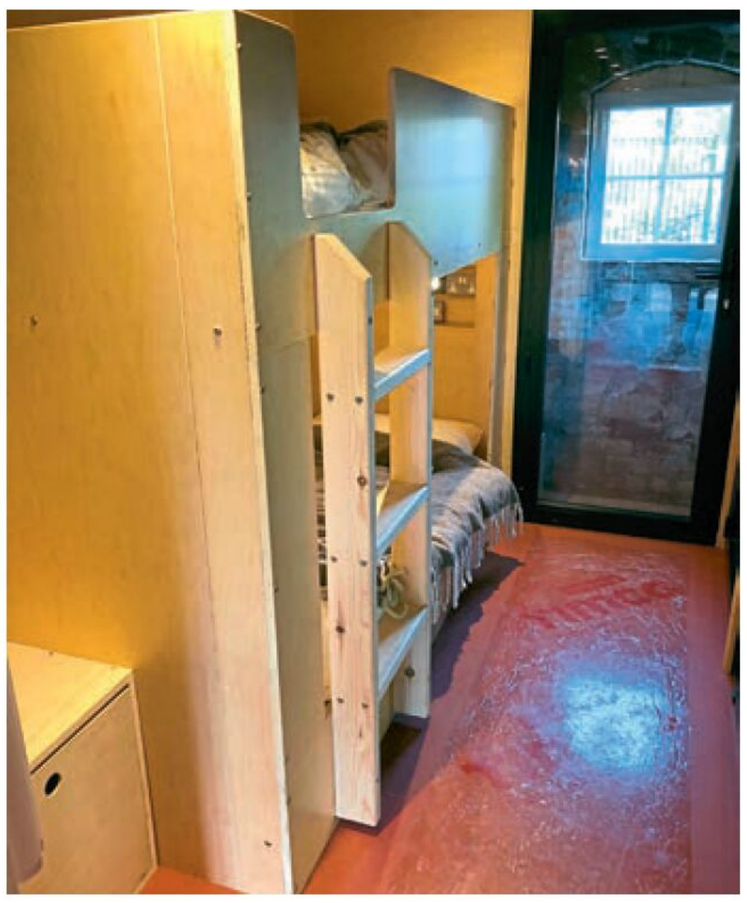
Paul Kenny, the last signaller at Hebden Bridge, demonstrates the lever system.



Sue Barlow, of Hebden Bridge Signal Box Heritage Group, and Andy Kelly, policy and public affairs manager for the National Lottery Heritage Fund in the north of England.



David Bell has devised a simulation system utilising the original signalling equipment.



The cosy confines of the Locking Room boasts bespoke fittings including a bunk bed as accommodation for visitors.



The clock presented to former Hebden Bridge stationmaster Walter Terry.



The new kitchen area for overnight guests.



The structure has been repurposed into quirky accommodation and an educational centre.

A website with supporting educational resources linked to the 'box's history and a computerised simulation linked to the levers, created by David Bell, the retired signalling, testing and commissioning engineer, giving visitors hands-on demonstrations of its operation, also form part of the project.

Despite its trackside location, this basic yet cosy accommodation is buffeted by trees and cosseted by tranquility in this landscaped location. With easy and pleasant walking routes and convenient transport links, the 'box is handily placed for exploring different destinations.

"It is quirky overnight accommodation," said Karin, "and it is really exciting that it has finally opened, but we still have much to do and we have lots of plans for exhibitions.

"It is part of our heritage, and we are proud of the heritage of this place and the station. It is so beautiful, and this is going to be part of that – it is going to be part of the visitor experience.

"The local community will have an interest in it, but I think it will encourage more tourists by train, people who are interested in trains and railway history," added Diana.

The Mayor of Hebden Royd Town Council, Coun Steve Woodhead, said when he began his mayoral year, he wanted it to be about people, partnerships and positivity and said that this project encompassed all that, as well as evoking fond memories for people.

Anna Jipps, company secretary for the Railway Heritage Trust, said: "The trust has been involved with the project for a number of years and is delighted to see the signalbox at Hebden Bridge officially unveiled as a newly purposed heritage centre and holiday accommodation.

"We have given grants of £74,000 since 2022 and admire the creative re-use of this historic building, of which we hope inspires other parts of the railway industry to follow suit."

Visit www.hebdenbridgesignalbox.co.uk for more details about booking a stay and its restoration. HR

➜ Pictures by Sally Clifford.

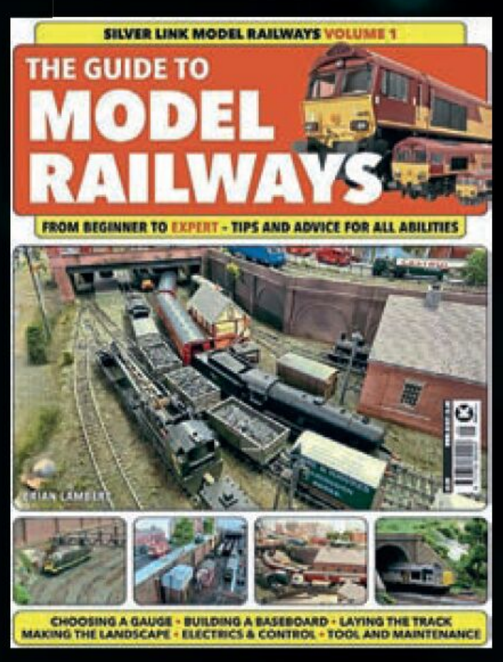
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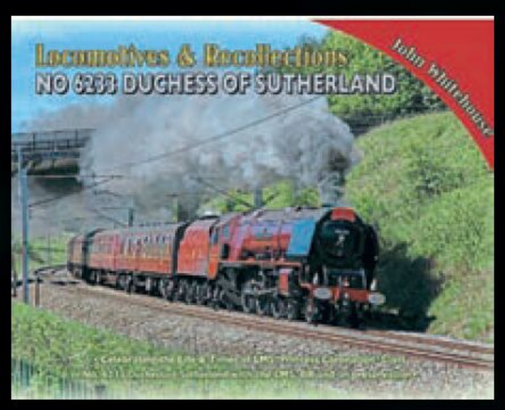
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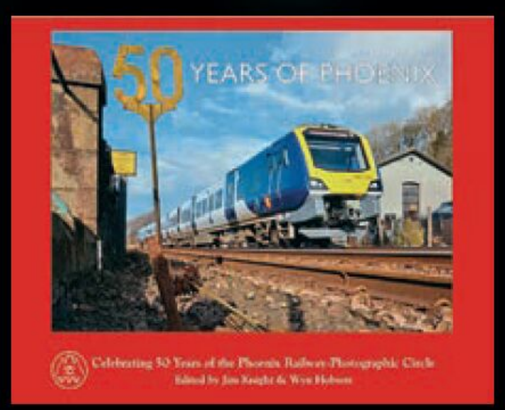


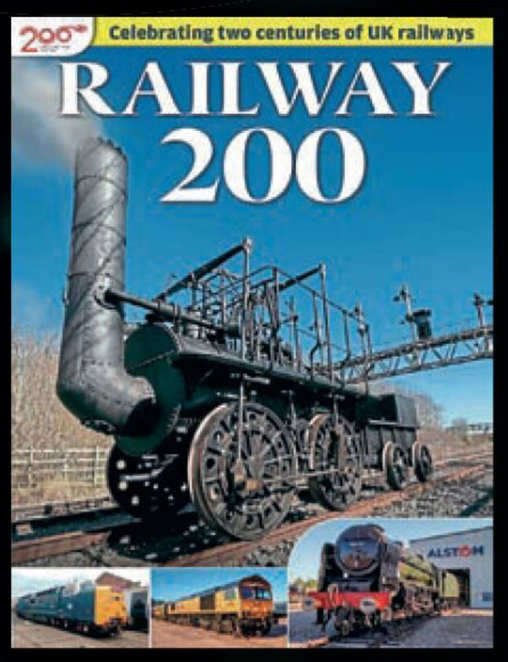
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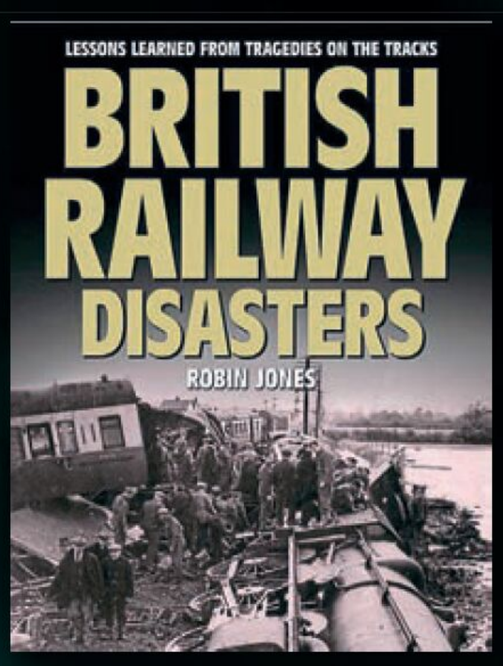
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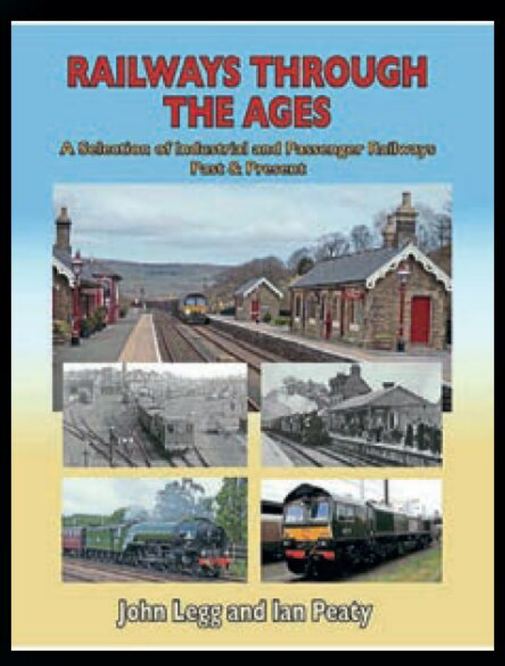


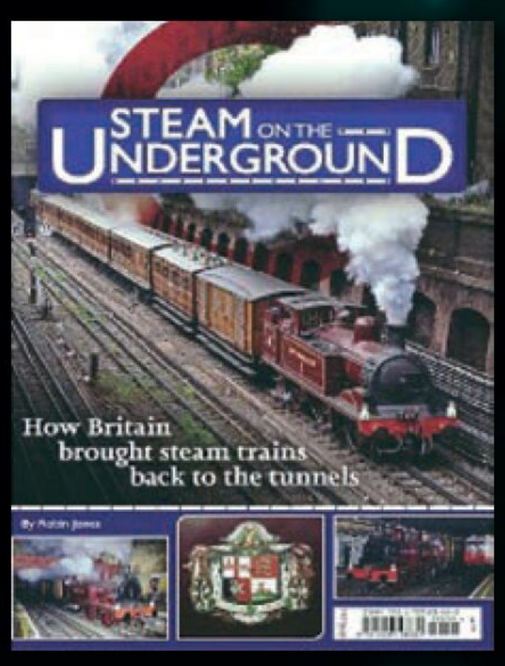


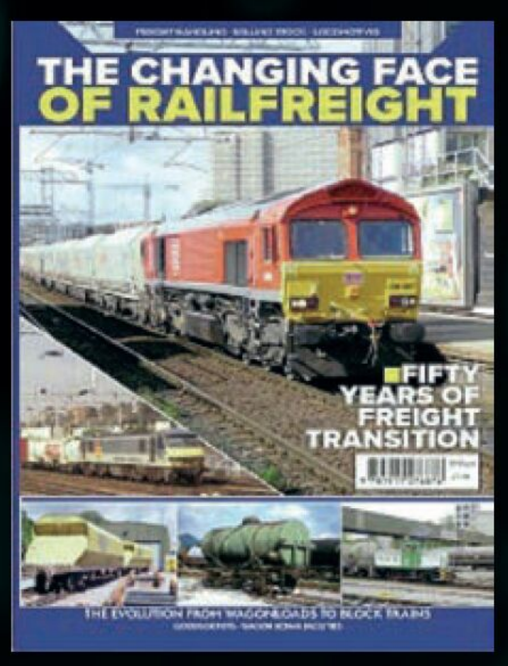














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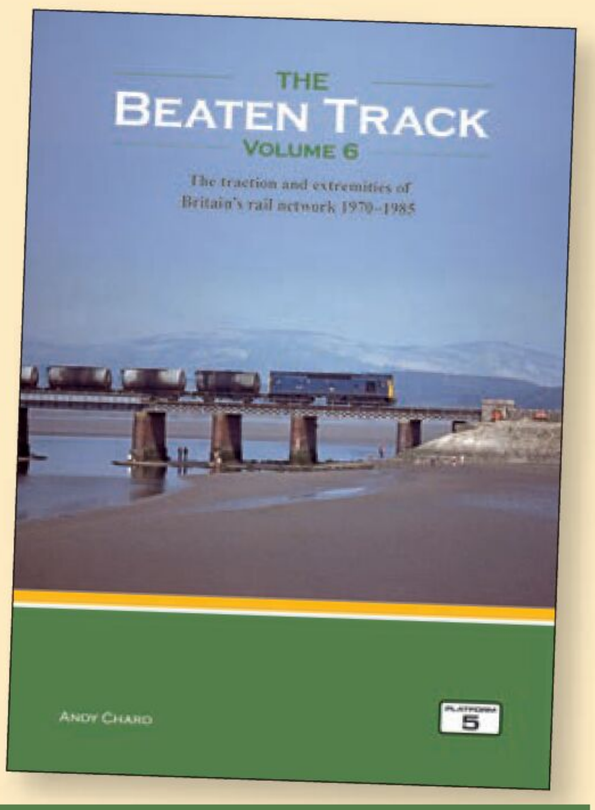
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The Beaten Track was first published in 2021. Its combination of outstanding colour photography from 1970–1985, featuring superseded motive power and long-lost extremities of the British railway network received widespread critical acclaim. Although originally intended to be a single volume, the success of The Beaten Track gave rise to a second volume, published in 2022, which continued in the same vein and received similar praise in reviews. Further volumes were published roughly annually.

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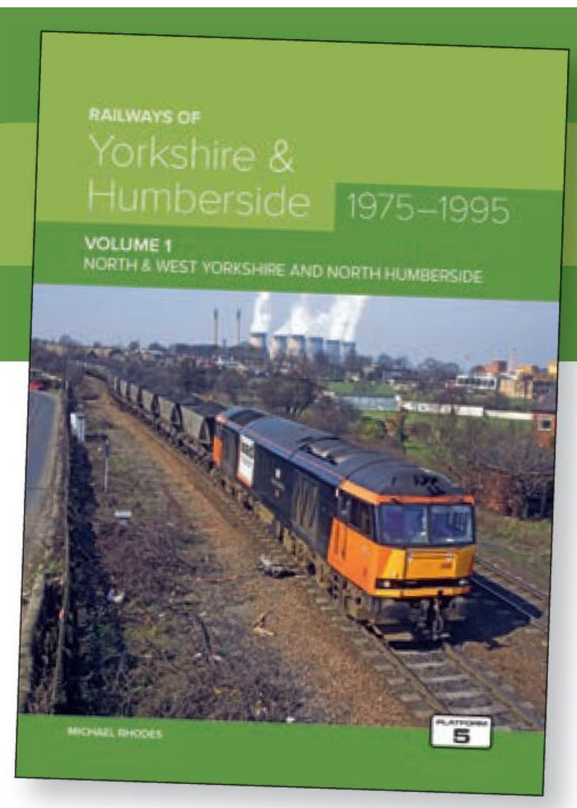


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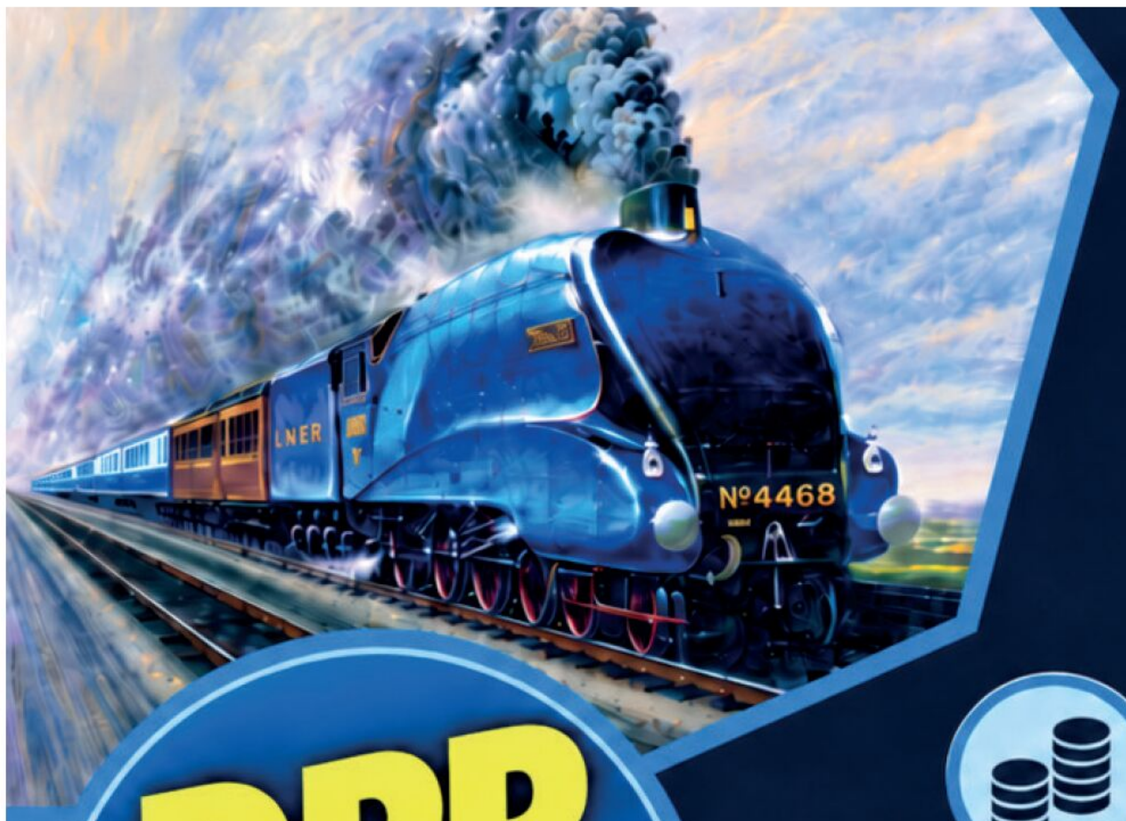
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The latest slew of new exclusives products from Cornish retailer

KERNOW Model Rail Centre unveiled a whole slate of new products that will be available exclusively through its Cambourne, Guildford and online stores, with some recent favourites making a highly anticipated comeback.

1: GWR railmotor

With the debut run of these highly sought-after models having sold out fast, those who missed out will no doubt be relieved to hear that a new run is planned, covering three different GWR liveries – GWR lined crimson lake, plus both fully-lined and simplified chocolate and cream. KMRC's exclusive tooling allows for both the Diagram O type and the Diagram R type versions, the former type's most obvious differences from latter being the larger boiler room windows, double leaf passenger doors and 'fishbelly' (rather than 'equalising') bogies.

The detailed models have a full representation of the steam power bogie with vertical boiler, in which a powerful coreless motor is discreetly mounted. The fully decorated interior is illuminated by working interior lights, and the Railmotors also have working oil lamps at each end showing either a white or red light depending on direction of travel. The DCC-ready models have a PluX22 decoder socket.

Prices start at £199.99, and delivery is estimated to be in the early part of 2027.

2: LSWR road van

Also making a comeback is this pre-Grouping era brake van which, just as with the railmotor, saw its first batch almost entirely sold out upon arrival of stock to stores. Among the seven different mainland and Isle of Wight running numbers announced for this latest batch is No. 5706 in LSWR brown with red ends, which is the example currently awaiting restoration at the Bluebell Railway.

Appearing for the first time, however, is No. WD13144 in Longmoor Military Railway green, one of seven this Hampshire military base acquired between 1938 and 1943, and the model will include the distinct plates that were affixed to the body sides while there.

Models cost £34.99 each and are due to arrive in stock by the end of this year.



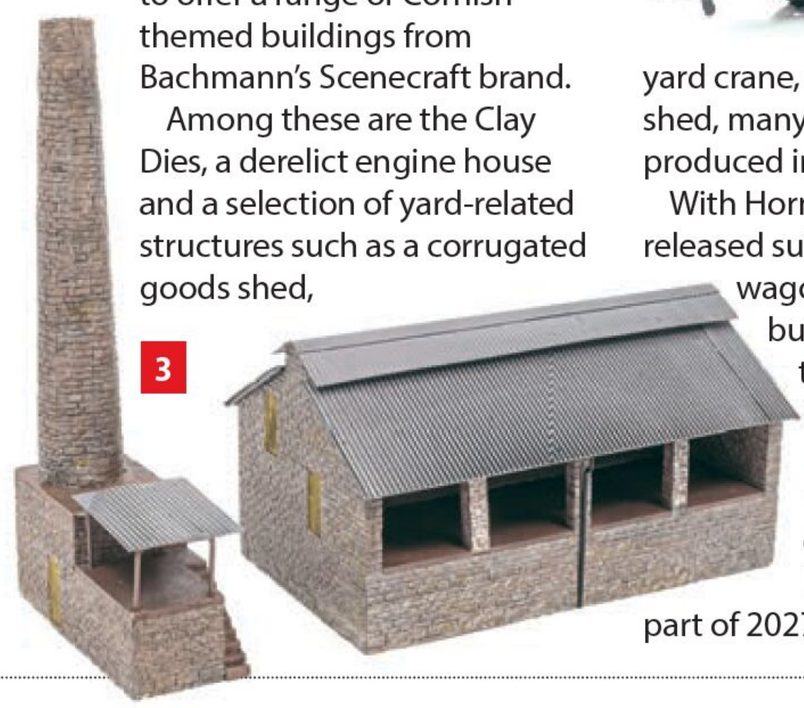
3: TT:120 buildings

With the recent surge in popularity for this revived scale, KMRC has jumped on the opportunity to scale down yet more of its previous exclusive models (and throw in a couple of extras) to offer a range of Cornish-themed buildings from Bachmann's Scenecraft brand.

Among these are the Clay Dies, a derelict engine house and a selection of yard-related structures such as a corrugated goods shed, yard crane, signalbox and engine shed, many of which were previously produced in OO and N scales.

With Hornby having recently released suitable china clay hopper wagons in the scale, these buildings mean such typically Cornish scenes can now be easily modelled. Prices range from £7.99 to £49.99, with delivery spread out from later this year into the early part of 2027.







IN OTHER exclusives news, recently arrived with Rails of Sheffield are the OO gauge Sonic Models LBSCR K class 2-6-0s, filling another gap in the market for Southern Region modellers.

Nine variants are available, spanning from the class's origins (with LBSCR lined black and Marsh Umber schemes), right the way through the SR era and into the BR one.

Models have been selling fast and were not expected to last long; prices range from £179.95 to £189.95.



ACCURASCALE continues to expand, and its latest announcements form part of its Powering Britain range, which tells the story of freight revolution through the wagons that powered the nation. The first of two announcements was the HBA/HEA coal hopper wagons, which entered service in 1975 and lasted right the way through the 2010s, with more than 2000 vehicles built.

Although built with coal in mind, later examples could also be found carrying rock salt and ballast spoil when coal traffic began to decline.

These models include tooling that caters for different springing and axlebox types, ladder positioning and more. Triple packs (£79.98 each) and single wagons (£23.99 each) will be available, and models are expected to arrive from the factory in the second quarter of 2027.



IN THE 1980s, some of the HBA and HEA hoppers found different uses; their bodies were removed, floor plated over, and thus they were turned into barrier wagons for nuclear flask traffic to Sellafield power station. Classified as RNA under TOPS, it was a wonderfully practical British Rail solution – take surplus rolling stock, remove the bits that were no longer required, and turn it into something useful for a completely different traffic flow.

Accurascale's model will incorporate the die-cast chassis from the hopper wagons, but this time with an accurately crafted deck, brake rigging, and a wealth of separate underframe rigging to faithfully replicate these long-needed wagons in model form. Due to arrive in stock at the same time, prices are set at £49.98 per twin pack.

OPERATIONAL HERITAGE LINES AND MUSEUMS

SOUTH EAST

Amberley Museum
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Arundel, West Sussex.
Tel: 01798 831370.
Open: Weds, W/Es until Dec 20.

Bluebell Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Sheffield Park, East Sussex TN22 2QL.
Tel: 01825 720800.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bredgar, Sittingbourne, Kent. Tel: 01622 884254.
Running: Oct 28-Nov 1.

Chatham Historic Dockyard
Standard gauge, one mile.
Chatham, Kent. Tel: 01634 820800.
Open: Weds-Suns, sch hols until Nov 15.

East Kent Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Shepherdswell, Kent. Tel: 01304 832042.
Running: Oct 30/31.

Eastleigh Lakeside Railway
10¼in & 7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Exbury Gardens & Steam Railway
12¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Exbury, Southampton. Tel: 023 8089 1203.
Open: Daily until Oct 31.

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: Oct 31.

Isle of Wight Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Havenstreet, Isle of Wight.
Tel: 01983 882204.
Running: Tues, Suns, sch hols + Nov 7.

Kent & East Sussex Railway
Standard gauge, 10½ miles.
Tenterden, Kent. Tel: 01580 765155.
Running: Oct 27-31, Nov 7/8.

Lavender Line
Standard gauge, one mile. Isfield, East Sussex. Tel: 01825 750515.
Running: Oct 25.

Mid-Hants Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Alresford, Hants SO24 9JG.
Tel: 01962 733810.
Running: Daily until Oct 31.

Mizens Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Woking, Surrey.
Tel: 07962 400922.
Reopens: Easter 2027.

Old Kiln Light Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Farnham, Surrey.
Running: Oct 25, 28, Nov 28/29.

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
15in gauge, 13½ miles.
New Romney, Kent.
Tel: 01797 362353.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Royal Victoria Railway
10¼in gauge, one mile. Netley, Southampton.
Tel: 02380 456246.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, 1¾ miles. Sittingbourne, Kent. Tel: 01795 424899.
Reopens: Easter 2027.

Spa Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
Tel: 01892 300141.
Running: Oct 24/25.

Volk's Electric Railway
2ft 8½in gauge, one mile. Brighton.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

SOUTH WEST

Avon Valley Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Bitton, Bristol. Tel: 0117 932 5538.
Running: Oct 24/28/30, Nov 1.

Bodmin Railway
Standard gauge, 6½ miles, Bodmin, Cornwall. Tel: 01208 73555.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27-29, 31, Nov 1.

Bristol Harbour Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Princes Wharf, Bristol. Tel: 0117 352 6600.
M Shed Museum open Tues-Suns.
Running: Oct 24/25, 31, Nov 1.

Dartmouth Steam Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Paignton, Devon. Tel: 01803 555872.
Running: Daily until Oct 31.

Devon Railway Centre
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bickleigh, Devon.
Tel: 01884 855671.
Open: Oct 24/25, 27-31, Nov 1.

East Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Cranmore, Somerset.
Tel: 01749 880417.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27-29, 31, Nov 1.

Gartell Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Yenston, Templecombe, Somerset.
Tel: 01963 370752. **Running: Oct 25.**

Helston Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Helston, Cornwall. Tel: 07901 977 597.
Running: Oct 25, 28/29.

Lappa Valley Railway
7¼in, 10¼ and 15in gauge, one mile.
Newquay, Cornwall. Tel: 01872 510317.
Open: Sats-Tues, sch hols.

Launceston Steam Railway
1ft 11½in gauge, 2 ½ miles. Launceston, Cornwall. Tel: 01566 775665
Running: Oct 25-29.

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Woody Bay, North Devon. Tel: 01598 763487.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27-29, 31, Nov 1, 8.

Moors Valley Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile.
Ringwood, Hants. Tel: 01425 471415.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

North Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, 1200ft. Shillingstone, Blandford Forum, Dorset. Tel: 01258 860696.
Open: Weds, W/Es.

Plym Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Marsh Mills, Plymouth. Tel: 01752 345078.
Running: Oct 25, 31, Nov 1.

Seaton Tramway
2ft 9in gauge, three miles. Harbour Road, Seaton, Devon. Tel: 01297 20375.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Somerset & Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Midsomer Norton station, Silver Street, BA3 2EY. Tel: 01761 411221
Open: Suns, bank hols.
Running: Oct 28, 31, Nov 1.

South Devon Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Buckfastleigh, Devon. Tel: 01364 644370.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Swanage Railway
Standard gauge, six miles. Swanage, Dorset.
Tel: 01929 425800.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Swindon & Cricklade Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Blunsdon, Wiltshire. Tel: 01793 771615.
Running: Oct 25, 30/31.

West Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, 20 miles. Minehead, Somerset. Tel: 01643 704996.
Running: Tues, Weds, W/Es until Nov 1.

Yeovil Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Yeovil Junction station, Somerset. Tel: 01935 410420.
Open: Suns. Running: Oct 24, 30.

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 until Oct 31.
Running: Oct 24/25, 28/29, 31.

Another diesel for the Middy's locomotive fleet

THE Mid-Suffolk Light Railway has added another diesel to its locomotive fleet following its steamless summer. Like most other UK heritage lines during this year's record heatwaves, the railway ceased steam operation and ran a reduced timetable using a resident diesel locomotive in order to remain open.

Yorkshire Engine Company Class 02 0-4-0DH shunter No. 02003, originally numbered D2853 and which is owned by a member of the railway, will now help to run services. A total of 20 Class 02s were built by the YEC for service in areas of restricted loading gauge and curvature such as docks. Built as works No. 2812, D2853 entered service in October 1960. After leaving Bank Hall Shed, it worked at Liverpool Docks until it was transferred to Speke Junction. On August 31, 1968, the 02 appeared at the Derby Works open day and was then transferred to Allerton TMD, where it spent its final BR years.

In 1974, it was given its TOPS number 02003 but was withdrawn in June 1975 and sold to LCP Fuels, of Pensnett, in the West Midlands, where it was named *Peter*. It began operations in the firm's yard in 1976 and worked there until 1997, when it was acquired by the South Yorkshire Preservation Society.

In 2001, it was moved to what was then known as Rutland Railway Museum, and then to Barrow Hill Roundhouse two years later. In 2006, it was loaned to the Appleby Frodingham Railway Society and in 2016 returned to Barrow Hill.



The latest arrival at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway is Class 02 No. 02003, currently liveried in BR green with wasp stripes. JOHN DURRANT/MSLR

Pre-order Issue 352: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Halloween ghosts return to spook Sussex

THE Bluebell Railway is preparing to welcome visitors back aboard its Ghost Train this autumn, with a brand-new story, new ghosts, and an even longer run for 2026. Following a sell-out first year, the Ghost Train returns to the historic Sussex railway until November 1, inviting families, friends and thrill-seekers to step into an immersive evening of theatrical storytelling, heritage railway travel and spooky encounters.

The evening begins at Sheffield Park station, where visitors are encouraged to arrive from 4.30pm and soak up the atmosphere before the main experience begins. At 6.15pm, guests gather on Platform 1 as the story unfolds and the Ghost Train is summoned for the journey to Horsted Keynes, where passengers disembark to explore the atmospheric station and discover more of the story through immersive theatrical performances while the narrative develops around them, before the evening builds towards a dramatic finale.

The Ghost Train then departs Horsted Keynes at 8.10pm, returning to Sheffield Park at about 8.25pm. The experience is designed to be spooky rather than a traditional jump-scare attraction, making it suitable for families with older children as well as adults.



Visitors to the Bluebell Railway's Ghost Train this Halloween will be treated to an immersive experience as they make their way around the railway. BLUEBELL RAILWAY



The Ghost Train features specially-made decorations and effects, some of which are mounted to the locomotives to enhance the Halloween atmosphere. BLUEBELL RAILWAY

East Anglian Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Wakes Colne, Essex.
Tel: 01206 242524.
Open: Weds, W/Es.
Running: Oct 25, 28, Nov 1.

Ferry Meadows Railway
10¼in gauge, ½ mile.
Peterborough, Cambs.
Tel: 01733 398 889.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Mangapps Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¾ mile.
Near Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex.
Tel: 01621 784898.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Mid-Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 11½ miles.
Dereham, Norfolk.
Tel: 01362 851723.
Running: Oct 31.

Mid-Suffolk Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Brockford, Suffolk. Tel: 01449 766899.
Reopens: Dec 6.

Nene Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 7½ miles.
Wansford, Peterborough, Cambs.
Tel: 01780 784444.
Running: W/Es until Nov 1.

North Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles.
Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8RA.
Tel: 01263 820800.
Running: Oct 24-31, Nov 1, 7/8.

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: Oct 25.

Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Chinnor, Oxon.
Tel: 07979 055366
Running: Oct 25, 30/31, Nov 1, 7/8.

Cholsey & Wallingford Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Wallingford, Oxon. Tel: 01491 835067
Running: Nov 7, 13.

Didcot Railway Centre
Standard gauge. Didcot, Oxon.
Tel: 01235 817200.
Open: W/Es.
Running: Oct 24/25, 28, 31, Nov 1.

Epping Ongar Railway
Standard gauge, six miles.
Ongar, Essex. Tel: 01277 365200.
Running: Oct 24/25, 28-31.

Gunpowder Railway
2ft 6in gauge. Royal Gunpowder Mills,
Waltham Abbey , Essex.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Great Whipsnade Railway
2ft 6in gauge. Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable.
Tel: 0344 225 1826.
Running: Oct 24-Nov 1.

Hampton & Kempton Waterworks Railway
2ft gauge. Hanworth, Middlesex.
Tel: 01932 212235.
Running: Oct 25, 31, Nov 1.

Leighton Buzzard Railway
2ft gauge, three miles. Leighton Buzzard,
Beds. Tel: 01525 373888
Running: Suns + Oct 24, 28/29, 31.

London Museum of Water & Steam
2ft gauge, 400 yards. Brentford, London.
Tel: 0208 568 4757.
Open: Thurs-Suns.

MIDLANDS

Abbey Pumping Station
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Corporation Road,
Leicester, LE4 5PX. Tel: 0116 299 5111.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Amerton Railway
2ft gauge, one mile.
Stowe-by-Chartley, Staffs.
Tel: 01889 271337.
Running: Oct 24/25, 28, 31, Nov 1.

Apedale Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Apedale,
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs.
Tel: 0845 094 1953.
Running: Oct 24/25, 31.

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: Oct 24/25, 27/28.

Railway museums

Beamish
County Durham. The Living Museum of the North. Open: Weds-Suns.
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 until Nov 1. Tel: 01270 212130.

Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway
Blythburgh station, off A12 in Blythburgh, Suffolk. Open Tues.
halesworthtosouthwoldrailway.co.uk
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. Tel: 01535 690739 or 01535 680425. Open: Tues-Suns in term time, daily in school holidays.

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.
www.southwoldrailway.co.uk
Open: Suns. Running: Oct 25.

STEAM – Museum of the GWR
Swindon. Open: Daily.
Tel: 01793 466637.

Tiverton Museum
Tiverton, Devon. Tel: 01884 256295.
Open: Thurs-Sats.

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.

Cambrian Heritage Railways
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles (Oswestry), ¾ mile (Llynclys). Oswestry and Llynclys, Shropshire. Tel: 01691 728131.
Running: Oct 24/25, 28, 31, Nov 1.

Chasewater Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Walsall, West Midlands.Tel: 01543 452623.
Open: Daily. Running: Oct 24/25, 27, 30/31.

Churnet Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Cheddleton, Staffs. Tel: 01538 360522.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Dean Forest Railway
Standard gauge, 4½ miles.
Norchard, Lydney, Glos.
Tel: 01594 845840.
Running: Weds & W/Es until Nov 1.

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, nine miles.
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 823076.
Running: W/Es until Nov 8 + Oct 29/30.

Echills Wood Railway
7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles. Kingsbury Water Park, Sutton Coldfield.
Running: Oct 25.

Foxfield Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles.
Blythe Bridge, Staffs.
Tel: 01782 396210.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
Standard gauge, 15 miles.
Toddington, Glos. Tel: 01242 621405.
Running:Oct 24/25, 27-29, 31, Nov 1, 7/8.

Great Central Railway
Standard gauge, eight miles.
Loughborough, Leics LE11 1RW.
Tel: 01509 632323.
www.gcrailway.co.uk
Running: W/Es until Nov 8.

Great Central Railway (Nottingham)
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Ruddington, Notts.
Tel: 0115 940 5705.
Open: W/Es. Running: Oct 30, Nov 7.

Midland Railway – Butterley
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Ripley, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01773 570140.
Running: Oct 24/25, 28, 31, Nov 1, 6/7.

National Tramway Museum
Standard gauge, one mile. Crich, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01773 854 321
Open: Daily until Nov 1.

Northampton & Lamport Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Pitsford, Northants. Tel: 01604 820327.
Running: Oct 31, Nov 1.

Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Hunsbury Hill, Northampton. Tel: 01604 702031.
Running: Nov 1.

Peak Rail
Standard gauge, four miles.
Matlock, Derbyshire. Tel: 01629 580381.
Running: Oct 24/25, 28, 31, Nov 1.

Perrygrove Railway
15in gauge. B4228, Coleford, Gloucestershire.
Tel: 01594 834991.
Open: Tues, Thurs, W/Es, sch hols.

Rocks by Rail
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Cottesmore, Rutland. Tel: 07974 171068.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Rudyard Lake Railway
10¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Leek, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 269948.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Rushden Transport Museum & Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Rushden, Northants. Tel 0300 3023 150.
Running: TBA.

Severn Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 16 miles.
Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 1QR.
Tel: 01562 757900.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Statfold Country Park
Multiple gauges, one mile.
Tamworth, Staffs B79 0BU.
Tel: 01827 830389.
Open: Daily until Nov 1.

Tanat Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Nantmawr, Shropshire SY10 9HW.
Tel: 01691 780042.
www.tanatvalleyrailway.co.uk
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Telford Steam Railway
Standard gauge, one mile. Telford, Shropshire.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Toddington Narrow Gauge Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, Toddington.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

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: Oct 24/25, 28/29, 31, Nov 1.

East Lancashire Railway
Standard gauge, 12 miles. Bury, Lancs.
Tel: 0333 320 2830.
Running: W/Es until Nov 15 + Oct 28-30.

Eden Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Warcop, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 342309.
Running: Oct 25.

Great Laxey Mine Railway
19in gauge, ¼ mile. Laxey, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 862007/670386.
Running: Oct 31, Nov 1.

Groudle Glen Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 670453.
Running: Suns until Oct 18.

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: Oct 24-26, 29-31, Nov 1.

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 until Nov 1.

Manx Electric Railway
3ft gauge, 17 miles (MER).
Douglas, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 697473.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27-29, 31, Nov 1.

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway
15in gauge, seven miles. Ravenglass, Cumbria. Tel: 01229 717171.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Ribble Steam Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.Preston, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 728800.
Running: Oct 31.

Snaefell Mountain Railway
3ft gauge, 5½ miles (SMR).
Laxey, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 697473.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27-29, 31, Nov 1.

South Tynedale Railway
2ft gauge, 4¾ miles. Alston, Cumbria.
Tel: 01434 338212.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27/28, 31, Nov 1.

Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Threlkeld, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 779747.
Open: Daily until Oct 31.

West Lancashire Light Railway
2ft gauge. Hesketh Bank, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 815881.
Running: Oct 24, Nov 1.

NORTH EAST

Aln Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Alnwick, Northumberland.
Tel: 0300 030 3311.
Running: W/Es until Nov 15.

Appleby Frodingham Railway-Scunthorpe
Standard gauge, 15 miles.
British Steel Steelworks, Scunthorpe.
Tel: 07889 297271.
Running: Oct 24.

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.

Victory set for BuzzRail gala

THE Leighton Buzzard Railway is hoping to be onto a winner with its October 24/25 autumn steam gala weekend when it welcomes Decauville-built 0-4-2T *Victory* (1897), from the Bredgar & Wormshill Railway, for the occasion. The French locomotive's visit allows the LBR to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its twinning with the Froissy, Cappy and Dompierre Railway in France.

Also appearing will be Andrew Barlcay 0-4-0WT No. 1919 *Cegin*, built in 1931 for the Penrhyn slate quarry in North Wales and now residing at the Statfold Barn Railway. It will be in good company with fellow LBR-resident Andrew Barclay locomotives *Doll* and *Gurtrude* – the first time these three will have ever been seen together in steam.

The event was originally scheduled for the weekend of September 12/13 but was moved to the new date owing to concerns over fire risk after the long, dry summer. Further details and tickets can be found by visiting www.buzzrail.co.uk



Decauville 0-4-2T *Victory* will help the LBR celebrate the anniversary of its twinning with a narrow gauge line in France. LBR

Pre-order Issue 352: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Embsay, North Yorks. Tel: 01756 710614.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27.

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: W/Es, sch hols until Nov 22.

Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway
2ft gauge. Skegness, Lincs. Tel: 07407 500884.
Running: Oct 24.

Lincolnshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Ludborough, Lincolnshire. Tel: 01507 363881.
Running: Oct 31, Nov 15.

Middleton Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Hunslet, Leeds. Tel: 0845 680 1758.
Running: Oct 25, Oct 31.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles. Grosmont, North Yorks. Tel: 01751 472508.
Running: Oct 24-28, 31, Nov 1.

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.
Reopens: Dec 27.

Weardale Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles. Stanhope, Co. Durham. Tel: 07729 765504.
Running: Oct 25, 30/31.

Wensleydale Railway
Standard gauge, 22 miles. Leeming Bar, North Yorkshire. Tel: 01677 425805.
Running: Oct 31, Nov 7.

Whistlestop Valley Railway (Kirklees)
15in gauge, four miles. Huddersfield, West Yorks. Tel: 01484 865727.
Running: W/Es, sch hols until Nov 22.

Yorkshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1,000ft. Fimber, East Yorkshire. Tel: 01377 338053.
Running: Oct 25, 28.

WALES

Bala Lake Railway
2ft gauge, 4½ miles. Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01678 540666.
Running: Daily until Oct 31.

Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles. Blaenavon, Torfaen. Tel: 01495 792263.
Running: Oct 24/25, 30/31.

Brecon Mountain Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, five miles. Pant, Mid-Glamorgan. Tel: 01685 722988.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27-29, 31, Nov 1.

Corris Railway
2ft 3in gauge, ¾ mile. Corris, near Machynlleth. Tel: 01654 761701.
Running: Oct 24/25, 31, Nov 1.

Fairbourne Railway
12¼in gauge, two miles. Fairbourne, Gwynedd. Tel: 01341 250362.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Ffestiniog Railway
2ft gauge, 13½ miles. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 516000.
Running: Daily until Oct 31.

Gwili Railway
Standard gauge, four miles. Bronwydd Arms, Carmarthenshire. Tel: 01267 238213.
Running: Oct 25, 28-31, Nov 12, 24.

Llanberis Lake Railway
2ft gauge, three miles. Llanberis, Gwynedd. Tel: 01286 870549.
Running: Oct 24-Nov 1.

Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Cynheidre, Carmarthenshire. Tel: 07956 082305.
Running: Oct 31.

Llangollen Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Llangollen, Denbighshire. Tel: 01978 860979.
Running: W/Es until Nov 8 + Oct 28-30.

Rhyl Miniature Railway
15in gauge. Rhyl, North Wales. Tel: 01352 759109.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Snowdon Mountain Railway
800mm gauge, 4½ miles. Llanberis, Gwynedd. Tel: 01286 870223.
Running: Oct 24/25.

Talyllyn Railway
2ft 3in gauge, 7½ miles. Tywyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01654 710472.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Vale of Rheidol Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, 12 miles. Aberystwyth, Ceredigion. Tel: 01970 625819.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 513402.
Running: Daily until Oct 31.

Welsh Highland Railway
2ft gauge, 26 miles. Caernarfon, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 516000.
Running: Daily until Oct 31.

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, eight miles. Llanfair Caereinion, Powys. Tel: 01938 810441.
Running: Daily until Nov 1.

SCOTLAND

Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Bo'ness, West Lothian. Tel: 01506 825855.
Running: Oct 24/25, 27, 31, Nov 1.

Caledonian Railway
Standard gauge, four miles. Brechin, Angus. Tel: 01356 622992.
Reopens: Nov 28.

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.

OCTOBER
24 Goods train day, Dean Forest Railway
24 Halloween trains, Yeovil Railway Centre
24/25 Autumn Steam Gala, North Norfolk Railway
24/25 Model Brick Show, Spa Valley Railway
24-31 Wizard week, Mid-Hants Railway
25-31 Halloween specials, Apedale Valley Light Railway
28-31 Fright Week services, Epping Ongar Railway
29/30 Steam 'n' Scream, Talyllyn Railway
29-31 Ghost Trains, Severn Valley Railway
30 Halloween trains, Yeovil Railway Centre
30/31 Halloween Trains, Bala Lake Railway
30/31 Steam Gala, Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
31 Halloween trains, Aln Valley Railway
31 Royal Forest of Steam Gala, Dean Forest Railway
31 Spooky Specials, Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
31 Halloween Spooktacular, Lincolnshire Wolds Railway
31 Halloween trains, Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway
31 Spooky Express, Llangollen Railway
31 Thomas Branch Line weekend, Nene Valley Railway
31 Halloween Trains, Peak Rail
31 Spooktacular Halloween, Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway

NOVEMBER
1 Halloween trains, Aln Valley Railway
1 Steam Gala, Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
1 Royal Forest of Steam Gala, Dean Forest Railway
1 Thomas Branch Line weekend, Nene Valley Railway
1 Spooktacular Halloween, Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
7 Steam, Sparks & Spectacle, Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
7 Ride the Rocket, Llangollen Railway
7/8 DMU Gala, East Lancashire Railway
7/8 Small Engines Gala, Epping Ongar Railway
7/8 Southern Through the Ages, Kent & East Sussex Railway
14/15 The Last Hurrah, Great Central Railway
14/15 Steampunk weekend, Hopetown Darlington
29 Christmas Fair, Aln Valley Railway

Are you organising a gala or other big event? Email the details to Owen Hayward at owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk

Doon Valley Railway
Standard gauge. Dunaskin, Ayrshire.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Keith & Dufftown Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles. Dufftown, Banffshire. Tel: 01340 821181.
Running: Oct 30/31.

Lathalmond Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, Lathalmond, near Dunfermline. Tel: 07379 914801.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Leadhills & Wanlockhead Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Leadhills, South Lanarkshire. **Reopens: Spring 2027.**

Royal Deeside Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Banchory, Kincardineshire. Tel: 01330 844416.
Running: Oct 25.

Strathspey Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Aviemore, Inverness-shire. Tel: 01479 810725.
Running: Oct 24-29, 31, Nov 1.

IRELAND

Cavan and Leitrim Railway
3ft gauge. Dromod, Co. Leitrim. Tel: +353 71 963 8599.
Reopens: Spring 2027.

Downpatrick & County Down Railway
5ft 3in gauge.Downpatrick, Co. Down. Tel: 028 4461 5779.
Running: Oct 30/31.

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland
5ft 3in gauge. Whitehead, Co. Antrim. Tel: +44 28 9358 6200.
Museum open: Thurs-Sats.
Running: Oct 30.

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

CLASSIFIED

Contact Andy on 01507 529455
andy.bruce@kelsey.co.uk

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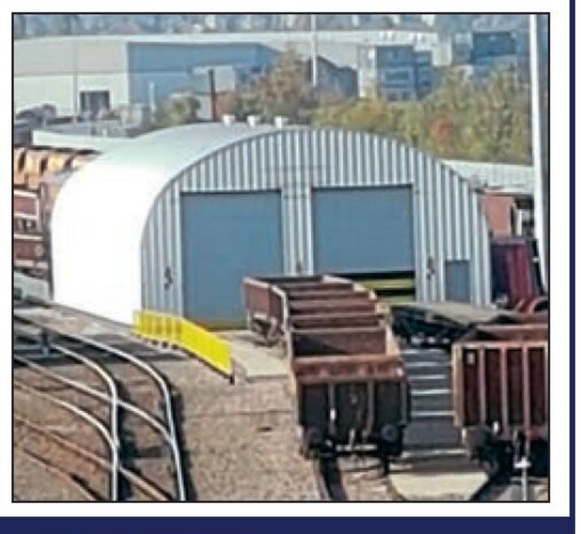
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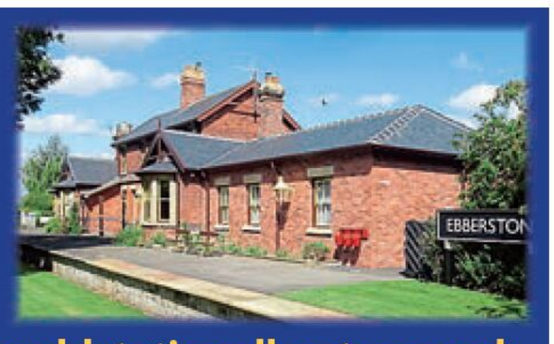
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If you've got a quirky photo, tale, poem, or anything else you think might be appropriate, please email staff writer Owen Hayward on owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk

Simon's totems are just the wicket

By Geoff Courtney

THEMED collections of platform totems are a popular part of the railwayana hobby, and sometimes the connection between the signs shows considerable ingenuity. Simon Turner, the boss of GW Railwayana Auctions, is a case in point. Coming from a family of cricketers – grandfather was a demon leg spinner who in one match took 10 wickets for 46 runs, dad was also a spinner who played in the Yorkshire and Worcestershire leagues, and mum turned out for Nottingham ladies – it was inevitable Simon took up the sport.

"I played at school and later club cricket at Twyning in Gloucestershire, and gradually became a safe fielder and No. 10 or 11 batsman," he said. "My bowling was all over the place because I tried to bowl too fast, but after the penny dropped, I slowed down as an off spinner and became second change and occasionally opening bowler.

"The team entered the Cotswold Hills League and I was asked to captain the second XI, and my moment came in 1996 when I took my best ever figures of 8-44. The club had strong ties with Worcestershire CC and we held benefit matches for players including Basil D'Oliveira, Graeme Hick, Steve Rhodes and Phil Neale.

"The highlight of my career was playing against Old England and especially Derek Randall, one of my heroes who I tried to emulate in the field."

Simon's cricketing career ended about 25 years ago due to a young family, full-time work, and the nascent GW Railwayana, but cricket has never been forgotten, and one of the prides of his own railwayana collection is set of three cricket-themed totems, Bowling, Seamer and Bat and Ball, from stations in Dunbartonshire, North Yorkshire, and Kent respectively.

Sadly, though, there is no station in the UK, or even a village, named Spinner. There is a Spinner Place transport hub in Vermont, USA, but a) there are no such signs as totems in that country, and b) even if there was, that would be cheating.

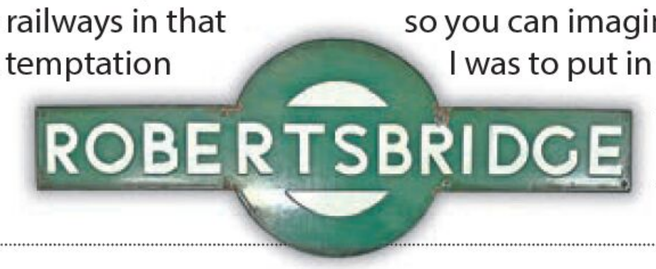


Cricket pitch: Simon Turner's three totems that reflect his love of cricket. Bowling is a station in Dunbartonshire, Seamer is in North Yorkshire, and the splendidly named Bat and Ball can be found in Sevenoaks, Kent. SIMON TURNER

And now a totem for Robert – but without a bridge!

READING Geoff Courtney's Railwayana column, I am always intrigued by some of the quirky collections and stories he highlights and thought I would share one of my own.

A few months ago, I saw an enamelled totem sign for Robertsbridge station come up for sale in a railwayana auction – in fact, it was one highlighted in Geoff's own column in issue 329 of this magazine. As someone who has always been interested in the railways in that area, I yielded to temptation to bid for it and followed the auction online.



It was a very desirable piece of railway memorabilia, no doubt because of the impending link up with the Kent & East Sussex Railway, so you can imagine how delighted I was to put in the winning bid – and I was then highly amused to hear the auctioneer's comment as the gavel went down.

"Sold to Robert, who lives under a bridge!"

The totem is now displayed on our lounge wall and much enjoyed by my family, and me – an enduring piece of history.

Robert Gillman, Romford

NEXT ISSUE
Issue 352 out Nov 20

The autumn gala season is well under way, and we continue our coverage of them all, ranging from a gathering of BR Standards at the Bluebell to an industrial takeover at the Epping Ongar Railway.

PLUS
MAKING GOODS WORK

Owen Hayward's series about the representation of freight traffic heads to the Great Central Railway for a look at the extensive wagon collection based there and gain and insight into how its award-winning Railways At Work events came to be.



WORKING IN MULTIPLE (UNITS)

To the casual observer, a DMU may look the same, but in reality, there were numerous types built for different purposes. Owen Hayward visits the Llangollen DMU Group to learn more about the five different types currently based in the Dee Valley – and why they are such useful assets... not just there, but to any heritage line.

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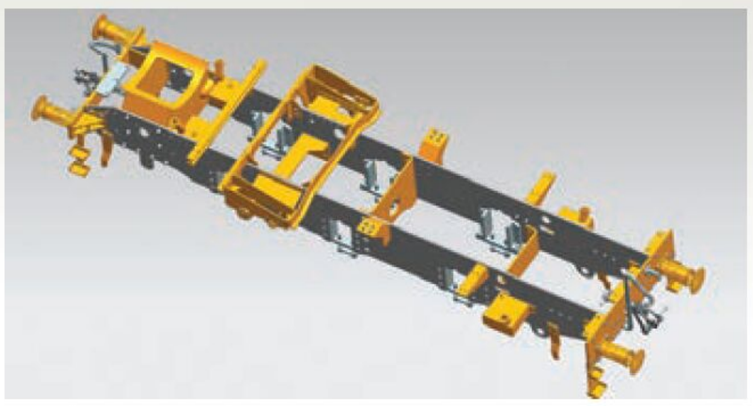
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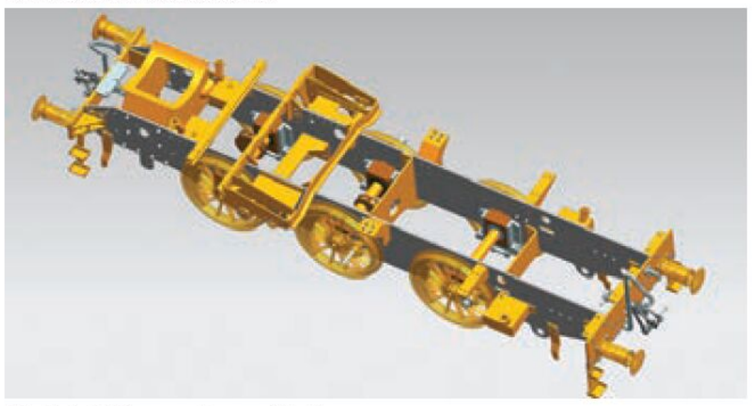
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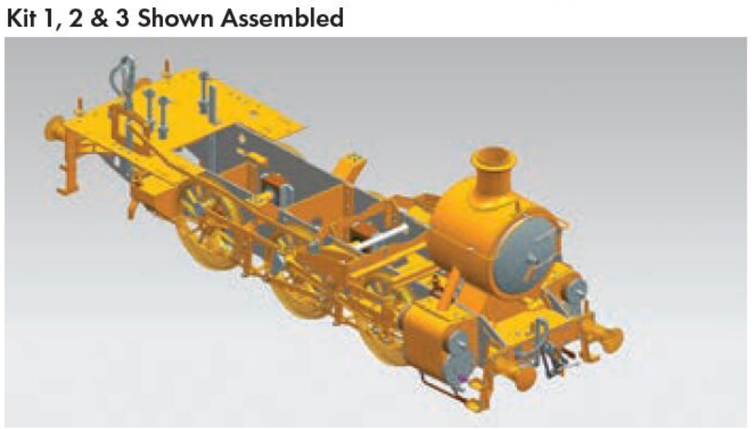


Kit 1 Shown Assembled



Kit 1 & 2 Shown Assembled

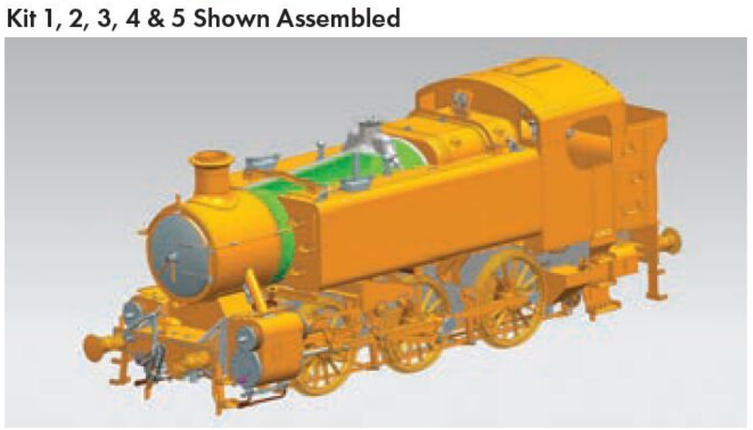
Kit 1, 2 & 3 Shown Assembled



Kit 1, 2, 3 & 4 Shown Assembled



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Kit 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6 Shown Assembled

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