

'Skipper' makes a welcome Devon return

CLASS 142 'Pacer' No. 142023 has been bought for preservation by the Plym Valley Railway (PVR), returning a 'Skipper' to the West Country.

It was unloaded at the line's Marsh Mills headquarters in Plymouth on January 26 after a long journey from Heaton depot, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The two car set is one of the original 'Skippers' which worked services in Devon and Cornwall during the 1980s. In common with many other heritage lines, the PVR said the acquisition of the 'Pacer' will allow it to operate low-cost passenger services on off-peak days.

Meanwhile, it has emerged that a solitary Welsh Class 142 has been secured for preservation. Details of the new owner of No. 142006 remained to be confirmed as we closed for press. The final Welsh Class 142 for disposal, No. 142085, was despatched from Swansea's Landore depot for scrapping at Sims Metals in Newport on February 4.

Barry Cordell: an apology

IN ISSUE 275, due to a misunderstanding, a news story wrongly referred to the former joint owner of GWR No. 1450, Barry Cordell, as deceased. Unknown to us, Mr Cordell had sold his shares in the locomotive to the late Mr Tom Jones, and it was the latter whose widow in America had inherited them as a sleeping partner, not as reported. We apologise for the error.



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Now is the time to back Bala railway extension

By Robin Jones

THE Bala Lake Railway's £2.5 million town extension could hold a vital key to the post-lockdown revival of the tourist sector in central Wales, chairman Julian Birley believes.

Bringing the 2ft gauge line into Bala would regenerate the town as a time when holidaymakers will be deterred from travelling abroad in the aftermath of the pandemic.

To help facilitate the extension, by the end of February the Bala Lake Railway Trust needs to raise the final £50,000 of the £276,000 required by Natural Resources Wales to carry out additional civil engineering works on the town's flood defences, which will enable the construction of the trackbed for a third of the extension.

If the money is not raised to allow the work to be undertaken as part of the £6.5 million flood defence upgrade scheme, the railway will be left with significant costs to complete its extension project, placing the whole scheme at risk.

Vital

Julian said: "It is absolutely crucial we do not miss this opportunity for Natural Resources Wales to do this work for us. Once done, it is done forever. Any donation, no matter how small or large, is most welcome.

"In every crisis there are opportunities and horrendous though this pandemic is, I firmly believe it is no exception.

"Like all parts of the UK, businesses have been absolutely decimated by restrictions inflicted upon all of us.

Bala is no different.

"The attractive High Street is deserted and one expects to see tumbleweed blowing across the road. Residents and business owners are putting on brave faces, but we all know we are in unprecedented times and are uncertain as to what the future holds.

"What we do know is that one day soon things will improve. We will be able to travel again and the sun will come out over this part of Snowdonia, and with that sunrise will come the visitors – of that, we have no doubt.

"Foreign travel is going to take a long time to recover from its current desperate situation. People's confidence of going abroad knowing that there will be places to go and airlines to get them there, and be safe in the knowledge they will not be stranded abroad is going to take some years to return.

"However, the desire to have a holiday, get away and try and put the winter behind us will be stronger than ever. Therefore the tourist industry of the UK can look forward to very busy times. This was borne out with the short season we enjoyed last summer. Each day on the Bala Lake Railway was like a bank holiday for the very reasons mentioned.

"We have been very fortunate in carefully managing the resources we have and as such are investing in additional coaching stock to carry more people, socially distanced.

"Undercover picnic areas are being built for visitors to picnic in safety and shelter. General maintenance on the station building and loco shed are

also ongoing.

"With the coming of the visitors will come their requirements for other facilities, such as shops, restaurants, pubs, hotels and B&Bs.

"Heritage railways, having been first established down the road from us at the Tallyllyn for almost 70 years, and with 160 of us now all over the UK, are a tried and tested attraction which pumps vast sums of money into local economies in visitor incremental spend.

Boost

"We have recently had a market survey carried out to judge the effect of the railway being extended into the town centre of Bala, and the conclusion is that there will be an additional spend of £1.25 million each and every year in to the businesses of the high street.

"We all hope that when the UK Government look for safe ways to invest in to kick-start those desperate local economies, they will deem heritage railways as a safe, sound and sustainable industry to support.

"While we are all locked down, the days are short and the weather is pretty miserable. Take heart that sun will come out again and these times will become a distant memory."

➔ To support the extension appeal, visit www.balalakerailwaytrust.org.uk

Donations are also being accepted with PayPal, by bank transfer at CAF Bank (sort code 40-52-40, account: 00023507), or by cheque to: Bala Lake Railway Trust, c/o The Station, Llanuwchllyn, Bala, Gwynedd, LL23 7DD. Gift Aid forms are available from the website.

Steam pioneers 'back together again'

HACKWORTH and Pease have joined forces again, two centuries after playing key roles in developing the Stockton & Darlington Railway, the world's first steam-operated public line.

Architect Matthew Pease, the great-great-great-grandson of Quaker woollen manufacturer Edward Pease, the main protagonist behind the line, has been appointed as president of the Friends of the

Stockton & Darlington Railway, while Jane Hackworth-Young, the great-great-granddaughter of superintendent engineer Timothy Hackworth, is now the group's vice president.

Achievements

In 1975, Jane Hackworth-Young helped get her ancestor's Shildon home restored, and it is now part of the

Locomotion museum complex.

Friends chairman Niall Hammond said: "We are delighted that two people bearing such famous railway names, who also have a deep interest in the line's achievements, have come on board at this crucial time as we seek to preserve and promote the Stockton & Darlington in the build-up to its 200th anniversary, which is just four years away."