

# Echo Weekend Memories

The Northern Echo

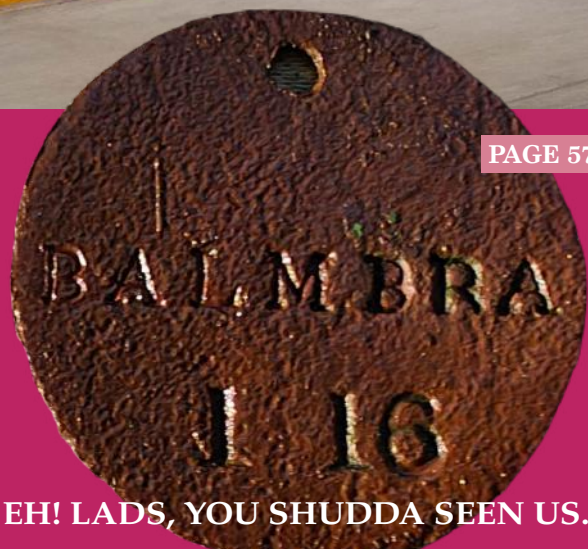


MEDITATIONS OF THE GURUS

## The first, the last, the fastest and the future

### THE HOLY GRAIL FOR THE RAILWAY ENTHUSIAST

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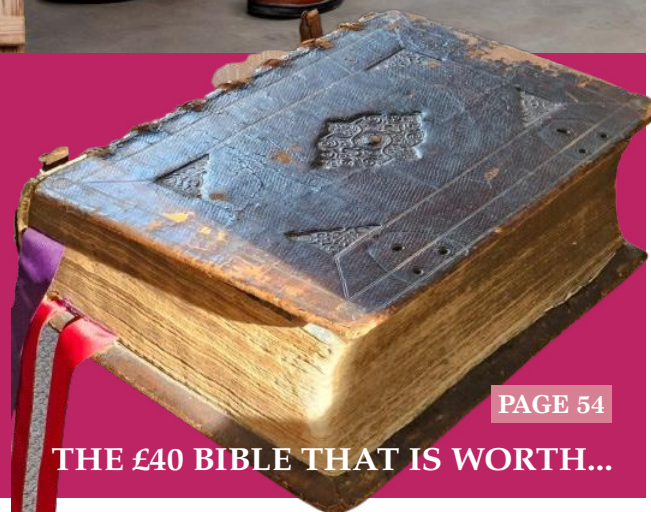
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EH! LADS, YOU SHUDDA SEEN US...

WHEN BIRKBY WAS BUSTLING



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THE £40 BIBLE THAT IS WORTH...

# EchoMemories

with Chris Lloyd



## Plate expectations

Locomotion No 1's historic metalwork comes home along with some other remarkable survivors

**E**NGINE plates from the first, the last and the fastest came to Darlington this week and came face-to-face with the future.

The star of the extraordinary display were the plates that were fixed to Locomotion No 1 in 1889 as it became a globe-trotting superstar, hailed as the starting point of the passenger railway.

Also on show was the nameplate from the last passenger steam engine to be built in the UK for British Rail, No 92220 Evening Star. It was manufactured in Swindon and was in service from 1960 for just five years and a day until the steam era ended. It is now in the National Railway Museum in York, but auctioneer Neil Booth is taking its original nameplate, owned by a private collector, on tour during the Railway200 year alongside the Locomotion No 1 plates.

To complete his display, he has borrowed the smokebox numberplate of engine No 60022 – the number the legendary Mallard wore after British Rail was nationalised in 1949. On July 3, 1938, Mallard, of course, set the world speed record for a steam locomotive, doing 126mph on the East Coast Main Line.

"I could never have imagined in a million years that I would be privileged to handle and display these amazing items to other railway enthusiasts," said Neil. "These are the holy grail of railwayana."

Neil, who fell in love with railways at the age of one when he was given an engine shaped eggcup, is to auction the Locomotion No 1 plates later this year, but before then is touring the country with them to show them off.

"This is all about presenting my hobby to other enthusiasts and people who love railway history, giving people the chance to see them in this historic year," he said, calling in on Wednesday at the A1 Trust in Hopton where the Prince of Wales steam locomotive, the sister engine of Tornado, is being built. It, therefore, is the future.

There is great excitement in the railway world about the Locomotion No 1 plates resurfacing after being in private hands for 60 years.

Locomotion No 1 was built for the opening day of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1825. It worked until 1857 when it was put on a plinth outside North Road station, which is probably about the time when the "Locomotion" nameplate was attached to it.

It can therefore claim to be the world's first passenger engine



Steve Davies, Chairman of the A1 Trust, and Neil Booth, of Railwayana Auctions, in front of the P2 engine Prince of Wales in the Hopton locomotive works. They have the smokebox numberplate from Mallard, Evening Star's nameplate and the 1870s or 1880s plates from Locomotion  
Picture: SARAH CALDECOTT

Right: Locomotion No 1 in 1933 at Darlington's Bank Top station. The plates showing the number one and the date 1825 are clearly visible

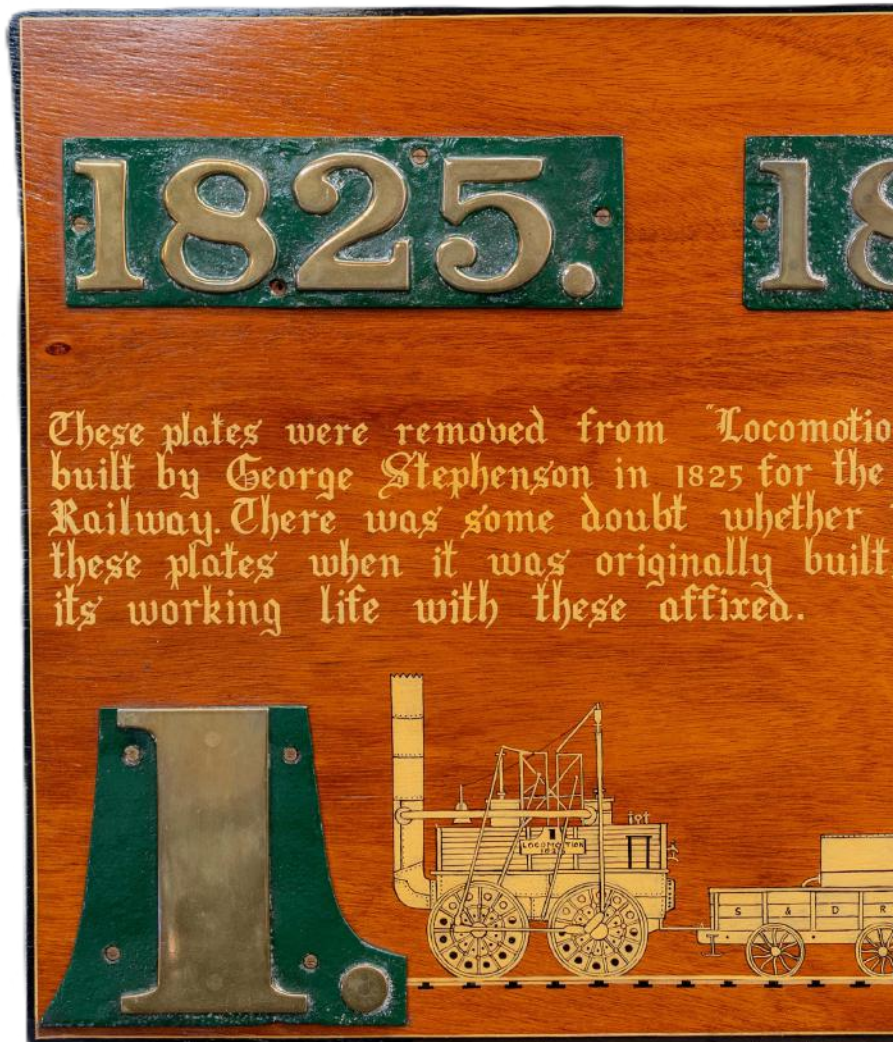
Below: A poster for the 1889 railway-related Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1889 in which Locomotion No 1 was the star exhibit and it was definitely wearing its plates

and the world's first preserved heritage engine.

In the Victorian era, as railways went around the world, Locomotion No 1 also went around the world. In 1876, it visited Philadelphia and it returned to the US in 1883 to star in an exhibition in Chicago.

Then it was invited to the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris.

For this appearance it was smartly painted in olive green and black and to visibly prove its place in history, a plate with "1" on it and another with the date "1825" were cast and placed on its right hand side – the side the public would view it from. These plates might have been on

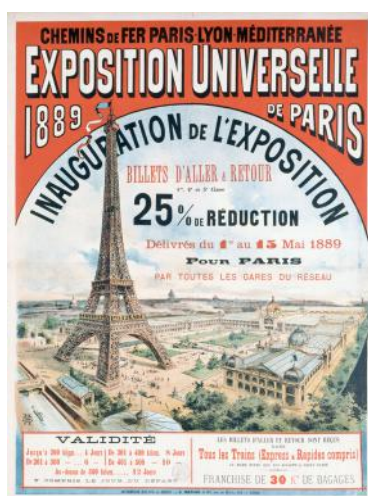


it during its American jaunt but they were definitely on it when it went to France.

When it had finished wowing the Parisiennes, it continued its travels to Edinburgh and returned to Darlington in 1892. Given that it was now a global superstar, it was felt that it was

inappropriate for it to stand outside, open to the elements at North Road, so it was placed under cover in Bank Top Station.

Now, though, the engine was viewable from all angles and so more plates were cast bearing its number and date for its left hand side.



If you have anything to add to today's Echo Memories:  
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Top: Mallard and its 60022 smokebox plate. Above: Evening Star in 1983



There they remained for 70 years until 1961 when Locomotion No 1 was taken to the North Road Works for an overhaul, and they were taken off, leaving just "Locomotion" on the side.

North Road closed in 1965, and the Works Committee decided to present the plates to the Works

Manager Peter Gray. He had been in charge of North Road since 1961 and was highly regarded by the employees (and he was later awarded an MBE for services to engineering).

The plates were mounted on a board which claimed that Locomotion "ran most of its working life with these affixed". However, recent metallurgical tests have dated them to 1889 and 1892, which fits with the engine going on its overseas tours.

The plates are being sold by Mr Gray's grandson, David. He said: "They need to be enjoyed."

"We've enjoyed having them, but they need to be seen by a wider audience."

"I spoke to Neil Booth, of Rail-

wayana Auctions, and he soon became excited about them. He hatched a plan to take them on tour so they could be seen by the public before we look to actually sell them."

The first public viewing of the first, the last and the fastest will be at the Severn Valley Railway Spring Steam Gala in Shropshire over the Easter weekend, and after Wednesday's whistlestop visit to see the future, there has been enough interest to suggest they will be coming back to this area in the very near future.

Watch this space.

● For more information, go to [ukrailwayana.com](http://ukrailwayana.com) or email Neil at [office@railwayana.com](mailto:office@railwayana.com)



Chris Lloyd with the Stockton & Darlington 200 magazine  
 Picture: SARAH CALDECOTT

## Bookazine is coming down the tracks to early subscribers

OUR commemorative "bookazine" celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway arrived back from the printers this week and is currently winging its way through the post to the 1,250 people who ordered it pre-publication.

They are giving it rave reviews. One person emailed to say: "Just to let you know that I have received the S&D200 book today. It's wonderful and will keep me busy reading it for some time."

And another emailed: "Your book arrived today. I love it. Well done."

The 116-page bookazine, which is sponsored by LNER, is to be formally launched on April 8 at Hopton, Darlington's new railway visitor attraction, with an illustrated talk by the Echo's Chris Lloyd.

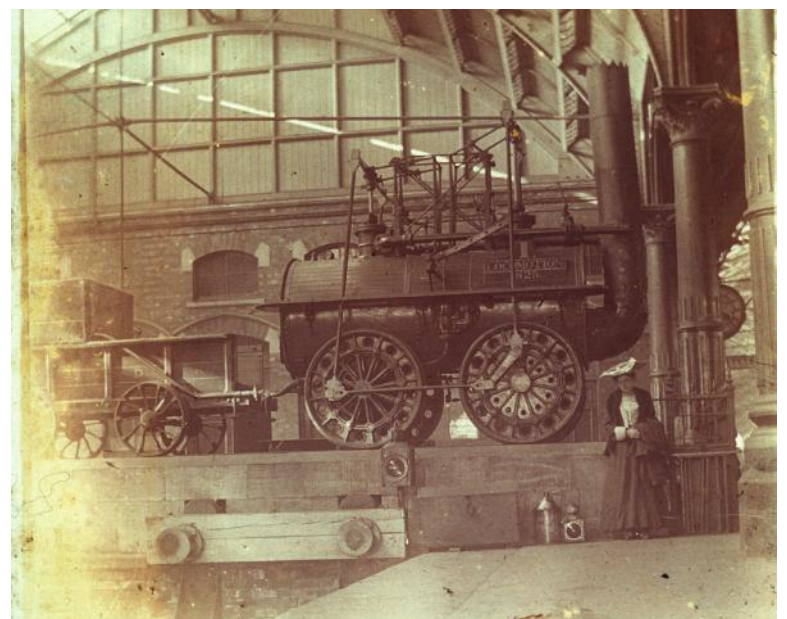
There are two types of tickets for the talk: for £10, you get a free copy of the bookazine and admission to the talk, and for £5, there's admission to the talk. Both sets of ticket-holders will be refreshed with tea or coffee.

To book a ticket, please go to [store.newsquest.co.uk](http://store.newsquest.co.uk) and click on the "tickets" button.

At the store you can also buy copies of the magazine for £9.95 plus postage, or you can point your phone at the QR code and it will take you straight there.

The bookazine, which is sponsored by LNER, is now on general release, and will be available in all good newsagents, including WH Smith in Darlington's Cornmill Centre. It also doubles as a programme for this year's SDR200 events.

In the talk, which starts at 10am on April 8, Chris, who has written the bookazine, will tell some of his favourite stories about the birth of the railway, starting up on Cockfield Fell and finishing on Stockton quayside, and featuring a dastardly derauling duke who tried to stop the railway, a meeting in a kebab shop that changed history, a pipe-smoker's spark that lit Locomotion No 1, and the S&DR's inaugural journey on September 27, 1825.



Locomotion No 1 at Bank Top Station, Darlington, wearing the cast iron plates that now feature on the touring board