

Oldest, Youngest and Fastest

Famous locomotive artefacts come together to celebrate bicentennial.

BR '9F' 2-10-0 No. 9220 Evening Star
Completed at Swindon, March 1960
Hornby model: Cat No. R3988



Artefacts connecting railways across the 200 years since the first steam locomotive pulled passengers on a public railway, are to go on a tour of the UK, helping celebrate 'Railway 200' at galas and special events through until October.

The re-emergence of number and date plates that once adorned 1825-built Stephenson 0-4-0 *Locomotion* came as a surprise, having languished out of public sight since 1962, they were thought by many to have been lost forever.

However, they had been presented to Darlington Works Manager Peter Gray, when the locomotive plant closed in 1965, by the Works Committee in recognition of his service.

Locomotion itself had been on display at Darlington Bank Top station since the late 1800s and was brought into the nearby works for a spruce up in 1962. "But the plates never went back onto the loco" says Peter Gray's grandson, David Gray, who was given the plates as a keepsake when his grandfather passed away in 1989.

"The plates were mounted on a board with an inscription," says David, "then presented to my grandfather."

When *Locomotion* was built, it didn't carry name or number plates, nor did any of its fellow locomotives. Instead, the Stockton & Darlington Railway's fledgling fleet would be referred to by its driver, such as 'Joe's engine'. Over time this informal way of identifying its engines became impractical and, by the 1830s, the company introduced a numbering system, though at first these were thought to be painted on, perhaps on the



S&DR 0-4-0 No. 1 Locomotion
Completed at Newcastle in 1825
Hornby model: Cat No. R30388



LNER 'P2' No. 2007 Prince of Wales
Under construction at Darlington
Hornby model: Cat No. R3983



chimney, rather than fitting cast plates.

Names followed soon after and were probably also painted on, in this case to the boiler cladding, before the idea of casting nameplates was thought of. After all, this was the first public railway, so there was nothing else to be guided by.

The actual plates that have survived were fitted to the locomotive in the 1880s and went with it to France for the Paris Exhibition in 1889 and the opening of the Eiffel Tower.

"They've been in the family ever since," says David, "but have spent most of their time stored in a bank vault as we were worried they might be stolen. So, now we feel it's time somebody else has the chance to own them."


And so, the plates are being auctioned in October this year and auctioneer Neil Booth has arranged with David for the plates to form the basis of a Railwayana Roadshow: "To give everyone a chance of viewing these iconic plates."

Along with the No. 1 plates, Neil will also be showing the left-hand plate from *Evening Star*, the last locomotive built for BR in 1960, and thereby 'bookending' the main line steam era in the UK. Also travelling with the Roadshow will be the BR-era smokebox plate from the world's fastest steam locomotive, No. 60022 *Mallard*, which as LNER No. 4468 set the world record for steam in 1938, a record that still stands to this day.

As well as a display of railwayana, the Roadshow, which is sponsored by *TRACKSIDE* magazine, will also have a walk-in valuation service, where enthusiasts can bring along artefacts or pictures of them, for an informal valuation by one of Railwayana Auctions UK's experts.

The first public showing of the plates will be at the Severn Valley Railway's Spring Steam Gala over the Easter weekend, where they will be displayed at Kidderminster Town station. Others include the Cotswold Festival of Steam at the end of May and the Greatest Gathering at Derby at the start of August. For a full list, go to www.ukrailwayana.com

The picture shows the three plates on display at Darlington, in front an even younger engine than No. 92220 *Evening Star*, the yet-to-be completed LNER 'P2' No. 2007 *Prince of Wales*, with Steve Davies (left), Chairman of the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, who are building the new 2-8-2 at Hopetown Works in Darlington. Railwayana Auctions UK's Neil Booth is on the right.

By happy coincidence, all four locomotives represented in this view are produced in model form by Hornby! 

LNER 'A4' No. 60022 Mallard
Completed at Doncaster, March 1938
Hornby model: Cat No. R3737

