

Victorian Rail Gem bursts from its Cocoon

On a quiet sunny Sunday, Bill Owen woke to a day of great significance at Ruddington, one in which he was to take a pivotal role. The crew of LMS 8F no. 8274 cleared the track prior to its first outing. Then, in firing up the Simplex 4-wheel shunter, Bill drew the resplendent 1888-constructed 6-wheel MS&L carriage no.946 from its cocoon in Building no.1. This was the reward for the massive, painstaking rebuild, many had anticipated so long.

As Tony Keeble explained: “In fact this was the first recorded rail transfer since it left the Manningtree siding in 1971, the year it was bought out of British Rail ownership for just £50.00.”

Doug Atkins who has provided the last of the very finely worked timber fittings for the doors points to the pictures of no.946 before its long protracted journey to Ruddington and its rebuild by the team that Tony Keeble and Pat Sumner have led from the start of its 16-year recovery. “The change is almost beyond belief and the end-result a tremendous credit to the restoration team.”

Clyde Pennington, the Rolling Stock Trust's co-ordinator at Ruddington, who himself has seen every stage of the rebuild from the earliest days of stripping out the rotten timber cladding and framework, pays tribute to the often sceptical GCRN onlookers who have watched the project. “We have had our moments but we are very grateful to GCRN and the users of Building no.1 who have stood by our wooden wonder and seen it emerge at last. Our thanks go to Mike Fairburn and Ron Whalley for facilitating this and the shunt around the Yard to enable this carriage to be extracted and tested.”

The carriage was drawn through the Yard's point-work and onto the siding adjacent to the Country Park to assess the spring settings and mechanicals, before being returned by Bill Owen to its cocoon. Pat Sumner, as the Trust's CME was happy to pass that stage of the route to clearing the Fitness-to-Run exam.