

GCR ROLLING STOCK TRUST

PRESS INFORMATION FROM GCR ROLLING STOCK TRUST

Date: 10 October 2018

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Victorian “Gem of a Carriage” Booked for Sheffield's Armistice Ceremony at Victoria Station

Coming to the heart of the City of Sheffield to add focus to the Armistice Commemoration on 11 November is a 130-year old recently-restored Victorian railway carriage. This is being prepared for its first visit to Sheffield Victoria Station in over 100 years and it is finished in the London Extension colours of the new Great Central Railway which opened its doors in 1900. And it has to come by road to stand outside the former Victoria Station and the Royal Victoria Hotel, following a massive 15-year rebuild.

This little carriage, of which near 500 were built, is an almost unique survivor and has been dedicated to The Royal Scots Regiment and the employees of the Great Central Railway who fell in the Great War of 1914-1918, has a ticket to ride by road to Edinburgh as part of the Nation's Centenary commemoration of the end of the First World War in November. Being prepared for the 600 mile return journey from the Midlands, MS&LR no.946 is to be honoured as the focus of a solemn assembly of the former Royal Scots Regiment in the heart of the home community of Leith, Edinburgh, as well as coming direct to Sheffield on Sunday 11 November.

Ken Grainger, Vice President of the Great Central Railway Society and a leading light in the recovery of the War Memorial to the fallen Sheffield employees of the Great Central Railway, now sited outside the Royal Victoria station, explained: **"It is wonderful that the GCR Rolling Stock Trust has brought their beautifully restored carriage to be a part of this Armistice Day commemoration. Dedicated as a war memorial in its own right, it is typical of the type of carriage in which many of our Great Central war dead would have left home for the last time."**

Tony Keeble, Trustee and Deputy Chairman of the owning charity, GCR Rolling Stock Trust, in revealing the details of the event, added: **"We are grateful and deeply honoured to be invited to take our gem of a carriage to Sheffield and to take part in such a vital commemoration, organised by our friends of the Great Central Railway Society. This carriage is one of the last of the type in existence, identical to those involved in the horrific rail disaster at Quintinshill when some 435 troops and passengers were killed, burned horribly or maimed in a 5-train disastrous collision on 15 May 1915. Just 50 officers and men of the 7th battalion of Royal Scots survived of the 500 who set out from Larbut station to continue a delayed journey to Liverpool docks to embark here for the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign."**

In November 2015, this carriage, which has been fully restored in Nottingham from a near total wreck, was formally dedicated to The Royal Scots at a ceremony in the presence of HM The Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire and The Royal Scots led by Col Brian de la Haye OBE. It now carries specially cast plaques remembering the Quintinshill disaster. Then in 2016 it was rededicated to the railway employees of the old Great Central Railway lost in that same tragic War.

The last time such a 50-seat vehicle was carrying passengers in Scotland was when conveying troops during the Great War when they were conveyed from their barracks to embark at Liverpool and other docks to each WW1 war zone a century and more ago.

By the time they were called up for war service by the Government's Railway Operating Division, most of this type of carriage had already been withdrawn from regular passenger service on the former Great Central Railway, closed by Dr Richard Beeching's Report, a trunk route that ran from Manchester to Sheffield, then on through Nottingham to London.

As they were substantially wooden bodied on a mostly timber frame, with tanks beneath the floors to supply the gas-lighting, they were considered a big fire risk – and that they proved. Some however survived into the service as camping coaches and engineers' wagons. No.946 continued at London's Stratford Locomotive works until the end of steam in British Railways ownership in the late 1960s.

As Tony Keeble, Deputy Chairman of the owning GCR Rolling Stock Trust and a lead in the 15-year carriage restoration, explains further: **“We are so pleased to be able to support the tribute that is to take place adjacent to the Royal Victoria Hotel at the recently restored Memorial to those of the Great Central Railway lost in the dire conflict that ceased one hundred years ago.”**

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Note to Editor - This carriage is currently on display at the Nunckley Hill Museum on the Mountsorrel branch, off the Leicestershire section of the Great Central Railway, where it is being prepared for its long journey to Edinburgh - then returning via Sheffield, courtesy of Duncan Milner Haulage and a 60 ft low-loader.

THERE WILL BE A MEDIA CALL ANNOUNCEMENT CLOSER TO THE DATE