



THE SHORT HISTORY OF GCR ROLLING STOCK TRUST

20 Years Rescue, Research
and Rebuild – 2000-2020



GCR ROLLING
STOCK TRUST
2020



Images: 1: Star attraction no.946 on display at Nunckley Hill Rail Museum
2: HRH Prince Richard Duke of Gloucester with Trustee Roger Penson
3: Our special 2015 Builders Plate – No.946
4: Immaculate fully upholstered Victorian interior

Cover images: On Solemn Commemoration Parades
Leith – Eve of Armistice - 10 November 2018 (Aerial shot)
Sheffield – Remembrance Day - 10 November 2018
Victorian and Edwardian classic train sets

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GCR ROLLING STOCK TRUST

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SHORT HISTORY OF THE GCR ROLLING STOCK TRUST

2000 to 2020



RESCUE AND RESTORATION – THE EARLY DAYS...INTO THE WORKS

While our short history began in the late 1990s, it was of course conditioned by the original manufacture a century before, in the later Victorian and Edwardian eras, and the story really then began in the late 1950s with a post War desire to escape the austerity years, using the opportunity to modernise and replace the old and worn out with modern shiny examples for the future.

Focusing in on the nation's railways, we were shedding old, supposedly uneconomic routes, outdated and surplus equipment, to create a future fast and efficient rail infrastructure. These transitions meant the old worn out stock was scrapped with just a small handful of engines, carriages and wagons surviving by being adapted for a multiplicity of alternative usages.

However, there was always a core of loyal supporters of the railway from which emerged a nucleus of dedicated enthusiasts who loved our past heritage. Many people missed the nostalgia, the drama, the sounds and smell of the steam era and so a dream was born into a movement. Like-minded enthusiasts started buying up the few remaining rare examples, this was so for rolling stock of the GCR and its predecessor, MS&LR. They also needed somewhere to display and run them.

Ideas settled on a section of former Great Central route in the East Midlands and a major preservation project emerged. Later a similar but separate group bought up the section from Loughborough to Ruddington, plus a part of the former Defence establishment at Ruddington. That became the Nottingham Transport Heritage centre, owned by East Midlands Railway Trust and managed by Great Central (Nottingham) Limited. Their main-stream core businesses were of revenue earning stock and regular Gypsum trains to East Leake works. As these did not easily embrace the fringe interest of preserving surviving former Great Central rolling stock, a dedicated Registered Charity was required to safeguard these rare, often unique, examples, and to raise the funds needed. It is a tribute to their design and build that they survived for so long, out in all weathers, with little protection.

GCRN Director Stuart Copson bought a GCR Suburban no.799 and a Clerestory carriage body no.1663, which he subsequently donated in 1999. Another GCR carriage – a Barnum no.228 – was set to be scrapped but was saved by an offer of £380. Restoration work commenced almost right away. This was the start in 1998 of an expensive and very lengthy journey. The Trust, an independent entity, from 28th August 2000, was formed, dedicated to rescue now rare GCR stock.

Considerable restoration work was already under way when the Trust was established. A unique part-restored, Barnum saloon/brake (no.695), most work done on its chassis and running gear, arrived on site from North Yorkshire Moors Railway in December 1998 and was donated 1st January 2000. Two more Barnums surplus to needs at Loughborough were next, saloon no.664 and saloon no.666, the latter owned by the national collection. The Trust took on the lease of the NRM Barnum from Loughborough but, following unacceptable renewal terms, this was returned to NRM care in January 2020.

A vision plan emerged of creating two passenger train sets, an express set of tourist open Barnums and a local set consisting of two Suburbans, two six wheelers and a single Clerestory carriage.

By tremendous good fortune, Peter Wilson and his team had purchased a large stock of used teak. They tooled up and had started making replacement teak cladding for no.228, reinforcing its wooden structure, replacing roof boards and inserting new ceiling panels.

Then in 2002, we were donated a 6-wheel MS&LR 1888-built carriage no.946 in very early stages of rebuild. With two eventual Trustees Tony Keeble and Pat Sumner in charge, the team effort was switched in 2007 to this vehicle's full rebuild. Having taken up residence inside Building no.1 awaiting a dedicated restoration facility, no. 228 became the workshop for our 6-wheeler rebuild, finished in the GCR original livery colour schemes of 1900, with body sides of French grey and dark oak.

Currently, no.946 is on display in the Rail Museum at Nunckley Hill until exhibition space becomes available at Ruddington. In two separate dedication ceremonies, in 2015 to The Royal Scots Regiment killed or injured at Quintinshill in the fateful 22 May 1915 catastrophe; and in 2017 to the employees of the Great Central Railway who fell in the Great War. In November 2018, no.946 was despatched by road to Leith where, in an eve of Armistice ceremony, the Trust joined the families and The Royal Scots Regimental Association. Overnight the vehicle was then shipped to Sheffield and the GCR war memorial for Remembrance Day. It also starred with CME Pat Sumner in a 2015 documentary on the Quintinshill disaster narrated by Neil Oliver. A royal seal of approval occurred when inspected by HRH Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester last July.

With the arrival of Mike Lang and his experienced RVP colleagues, restoration of Barnum no.228 recommenced and continues apace. Much work has been undertaken below the wooden body, including removing the bogies for heavy overhaul by Nemesis Rail, under generous sponsorship.

Current stock owned by the Trust is all of passenger-carrying vehicles, 8 in total.

Having undertaken their rescue, the funds and the skills available for the restoration objectives just cannot be realised without external help. The unique status Clerestory body no.1663, and the Barnum saloon/brake no.695, together with our second Barnum saloon no.664, are our prime candidates for on-site future rebuilds. We continue to seek partnership deals for the remaining stock, additional internal help, and a dedicated workshop with storage facilities.



Images:

- 1: Founding Trustees – 2005 – lt to rt – Arthur Barber, Peter Wilson, Richard Potter, Richard Tilden Smith, Gerald Thorpe, John Quick
- 2: No.946 abandoned in 1971 at Manningtree...
- 3: Unique no.946 6-wheel hunting lodge...
- 4: No.373 looking far better than it really was...
- 5: Clerestory no.1663 on ex-MoD flat wagon
- 6: Rescued – Cut in three-parts Suburban from Arncliffe
- 7: Suburban brake no.799 doubling as store's wagon
- 8: Potential Edwardian GCR train rake of 1910...

Images:

- 9: Reduced to skeleton framework – no.946 – first massive clear out
- 10: Clyde Pennington in style samples Victorian comfort
- 11: Builders plate of no.946 and vital gas pressure gauge
- 12: Today – Barnum no.228 on stands awaiting overhauled bogies
- 13: No.228's newly teak-clad saloon interior
- 14: First lift in over 50 years to extract Barnum bogies
- 15: To Nemesis Rail – two bogies for sponsored heavy overhaul
- 16: After 17 years patient work – no.946 just out-shopped by key multi-skills restoring team
- 17: Highlight in 2016 – Tony Keeble Deputy Chairman (l), Pat Sumner CME (rt), project leaders with Richard Tilden Smith and gleaming as-new no.946!