

# After 36 years, the SVR's flagship locomotive is back in traffic

September 12, 2022



The Severn Valley Railway fulfilled the dreams of many hundreds of people on 9 September when it re-launched GWR No. 4930 Hagley Hall back into traffic. The SVR's flagship locomotive hauled its first passenger service for 36 years, following an overhaul that cost £1.4 million.

Around 250 people gathered on the concourse of Kidderminster Town station, and proceedings began with a minute's silence to honour Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who died the day before.

"The overhaul of Hagley Hall has truly been the stuff of dreams," said Mike Ball, SVR chairman. "Many people here today shared that dream. They had a vision and the grit to carry on with a project they cared passionately about. It's thanks to them that we're here today, to celebrate 4930's return to steam."

One of the guests of honour was Columb Howell, an original SVR pioneer, who helped save the railway in the 1960s. Almost 50 years ago he was one of a small team that rescued the rusting locomotive from a scrapyard in Barry, Wales.

After restoration, the locomotive returned to passenger working in 1979. It cemented its role as the SVR's

flagship engine in 1984, when it hauled the first passenger service on the day that Kidderminster Town station was opened. Unfortunately it had to be withdrawn from traffic just two years later, after several of its boiler stays had failed, necessitating a major overhaul.

That overhaul had to wait another 27 years to begin, during which time 4930 was on static display at various locations. It entered the workshops at Bridgnorth in 2013 for work to begin in earnest.

On the morning of 9 September at Kidderminster the nameplates were unveiled for the first time in front of invited guests, including SVR volunteers and staff who had worked tirelessly on the overhaul throughout the long years, others who'd dedicated themselves to helping to raise funds for the project, and those who'd made significant donations. The project also benefitted from a significant National Lottery Heritage Fund grant in 2014.

At 12 noon, Hagley Hall departed on the first of two inaugural return trips to Bridgnorth. It will next appear at the railway's Autumn Steam Gala, which takes place from 15 September until 18 September.