

D-Day veteran to have train named in his honour by Great Western Railway

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One of Britain's last surviving D-Day veterans will today have a train named in his honour by Great Western Railway.

The train operator is marking 75 years since the end of World War Two by naming seven of its Intercity Express Trains after remarkable people involved in the conflict.

St Austell's Harry Billinge MBE was one of the first soldiers to land on 'Gold' beach at 0630 on 6 June 1944 as part of the D-Day landings. He was a sapper attached to the 44 Royal Engineer Commandos and was one of only four to survive from his unit. He went on to fight in Caen and the Falaise Pocket in Normandy.

He was awarded an MBE in the 2020 New Year Honours List for his fundraising efforts in St Austell for the Normandy Memorial Trust.

His name will feature on Intercity Express Train number 802006 and form the 1015 service from Penzance to London Paddington following the ceremony.

Harry said: "I am thrilled that this train is being named after me, but this is about remembering the fine men who fought that day, lots of whom never went back home again.

"It's important that their memory is remembered, and I hope this train will carry that message to thousands of people every day."

Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, said: "Harry's an inspiration and a daily reminder of that incredible generation. We can never say thank you enough for the privileges and freedom we enjoy today because of your sacrifices 75 years ago."

GWR Engineering Director Simon Green said: "We are honoured to be naming one of our Intercity Express Trains after Harry Billinge MBE, who undoubtedly took part in one of the most important battles of World War Two.

"We at Great Western have a long history of naming trains after Great Westerners, the past and present heroes from across our network.

"It is right that we honour some of those heroes of the war effort, remembering the sacrifice, bravery and tenacity that later generations owe so much to."

GWR is marking 75 years since the end of World War Two by commemorating seven remarkable individuals involved in the conflict.

At a train naming ceremony in March, GWR honoured **Odette Hallowes**, a French citizen who lived in London and on the Devon/Somerset border. Odette became a Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the most highly-decorated spy of the war.

Alongside **Harry Billinge MBE**, others who will have an Intercity Express Train named after them are:

- Wartime leader **Sir Winston Churchill**, widely considered one of the 20th century's most influential figures.
- **Wing Commander Ken Rees** from Wales, a Wellington Bomber pilot who was imprisoned in Stalag Luft III and played a vital part in the Great Escape
- **Alan Turing** from London, who led Hut 8 at the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park, responsible for the breaking of German ciphers
- **Cpl George Sheard** from Plymouth, one of the famous 'Cockleshell Heroes' – a group of young Royal Marines who volunteered for hazardous service planting mines on enemy ships
- **Tul Bahadur Pun VC** of the 3rd Battalion of the Gurkha Rifles, one of only 13 Gurkha's to receive the Victoria Cross.

Photo credit: Great Western Railway