

Heritage Railway Association announces 2021 awards nominees

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The Heritage Railway Association has released its list of nominees for its 2021 Heritage Railway Awards. New categories of award are included, reflecting the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on heritage rail. Across the UK, heritage rail operators of every kind regard the HRA awards as the industry's most prestigious forms of recognition.

Nominees for the Morgan Award for Preservation include the Mid Suffolk Light Railway, for their Shredded Wheat locomotive; the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway Society, for the restoration of GNR/M&GN Third 129; Great Central Railway (Quorn Wagon & Wagon), for their restoration of three containers, and the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland for their Guinness Grain Van 504.

The HRA's Coiley Locomotive Engineering Award nominees are the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway, for their Skeggy Simplex; Tanfield Railway for their restoration of the 1904 built Andrew Barclay 0-6-0t No 1015 Horden, and the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway for their restoration of the Large England locomotive Welsh Pony.

Nominees in the new HRA Award for Diesel Locomotion include the Mid Suffolk Light Railway, for their

Shredded Wheat locomotive; the Severn Valley Railway Class 50 Alliance, for 30 years of Class 50 preservation excellence, and the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway for their Skeggy Simplex.

The Lord Faulkner Young Volunteer Award sees nominees from the Severn Valley Railway, Tom Mills; Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust, Michael Abbott, and the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway, Oliver Edwards.

Nominees for the HRA Award for External Communications includes Mid-Hants Railway Ltd, for its Watercress Line film unit; Didcot Railway Centre (Great Western Society), for overhauling the Centre's marketing communications; Swanage Railway's 'Save Our Service' film-makers; the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's media and communications department, and the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway Preservation Society's 60 year celebration book 'It's Still a Lot of Fun!'.

In the Internal Communications category, the nominees are: the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway Society, for their Summer/Autumn issue of 'Joint Line'; the Great Western Society for the Great Western Echo magazine; the Talyllyn Railway, for their Control Centre public on-line subscription service; Bluebell Railway for The Bluebell Times, and the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway for 'The Earl' communication to working members.

In recognition of the ways that heritage railways have been forced to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HRA have introduced a completely new award, for Most Innovative Fundraising Idea. Nominees include the Talyllyn Railway for their Virtual Visit Appeal; the Mid-Hants Railway and Bahamas Locomotive Society for the joint Autumn Gala; the Seaton Tramway, for Tramathon Live 2020, and Bluebell Railway, for their film 'Steam Returns to Bluebell Railway'.

The HRA Award for Small groups drew a record number of nominations, including Southern Electric Traction Group CIC, for restoring 4VEP No 3417, Hull and Barnsley Railway Stock Fund, for Project 58+1 move to Hull College; Tarka Valley Railway CIO for Steaming Ahead; the Bahamas Locomotive Society for Steve Allsop and his 50 years' service; East Somerset Railway for their restoration of a platform, museum and outreach project; the Downs Light Railway Trust for their achievements with youth engagement, and Great Central Railway (Quorn Wagon and Wagon) for the Quorn Wagon and Wagon Group.

Nominees on the Large Groups category are Lynton & Lynmouth Cliff Railway, for their Top Wheel installation; the Isle of Wight Steam Railway for their platform teams; Swanage Railway for their social media team, and the Dartmouth Steam Railway & Riverboat Company.

The five contenders in the Outstanding Visitor Attraction category are Lynton & Lynmouth Cliff Railway; Didcot Railway Centre (Great Western Society); the Dartmouth Steam Railway & Riverboat Company; Seaton Tramway, and the Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust, for Statfold Barn Railway.

The HRA awards event also sees presentation of the heritage rail sector's magazine awards. For 2021, the Heritage Railway Magazine Interpretation Award goes to the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn Wharf on the Talyllyn Railway. The Rail Express Modern Traction Award goes to the Engineering Team at the Island Line, Isle of Wight, and Ian Smith of the Middleton Railway wins the The Railway Magazine Lifetime Achievement Award. The results of Steam Railway Magazine's annual readers' poll is awaited.

The HRA 2021 Awards event is traditionally the glitziest gala event of the heritage rail calendar. Acknowledging the significant impact COVID-19 has had on many, if not all, heritage railways, the 2021 event will be an afternoon event. It will follow the HRA's AGM and Spring Conference, to be held on March 3rd 2021, at the Grand Hotel, York.

Photo credit: Heritage Railway Association

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