

Lady of Legend to headline at the SVR's Spring Steam Up

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The Severn Valley Railway has confirmed No 2999 Lady of Legend as the star guest at its Spring Steam Up between 15th and 18th April.

This unique locomotive is the only Saint class engine in existence and is set to prove a big draw to steam enthusiasts at the event.

Lady of Legend was rebuilt by the Great Western Society at Didcot Railway Centre, and completed in 2019. It's a recreation of a Saint Class locomotive, using parts from 4942 Maindy Hall, one of the classes that was developed from the original Saint design. The dream to rebuild a Saint took 45 years to come to fruition and its success is testament to the dedication and determination of the GWS.

Announcing the VIP visitor, Helen Smith, general manager at the Severn Valley Railway said: "We wanted to offer up something extra special to our supporters this year, after everything that happened with COVID in 2020.

"We know that Lady of Legend hits a lot of sweet spots for so many people; not only is it literally the only

one of its kind in the world, but it's also a Great Western locomotive which is perfect for us. Plus this is the first time that 2999 will be seen away from its home at Didcot Railway Centre, and the first opportunity for it to really go through its paces on our 16 miles of line."

Graham Hukins, head of visitor experience and marketing at Didcot Railway Centre, commented: "We are delighted to make 2999 available for the Spring Steam Up as a similar visit planned for last year was one of the many things postponed when coronavirus hit. We hope the gala will be really successful and help signal to the whole sector that tourism and leisure businesses are getting back on track.

"Having our locomotives visiting other heritage railways is key to us engaging as wide an audience as possible with the history of the Great Western Railway, so it is very fitting the first trip away from Didcot for this unique engine is to the Severn Valley Railway - a line with an impeccable GWR pedigree."

The SVR's Spring Steam Up event offers visitors the chance to clock up to 96 miles of steam travel on three round trips, hauled by a combination of home fleet locomotives and Lady of Legend. The home fleet includes 2857, which starred in the recent *Enola Holmes* movie, 6960 Raveningham Hall making its last showcase appearance before withdrawal from service for boiler overhaul, and 34027 Taw Valley.

The railway will continue its successful and popular Covid-secure arrangements for this special event, including private compartments and tables for the whole day, enhanced cleaning regimes and social distancing measures in public areas such as platforms and train corridors. Additionally all bookings are backed by the SVR's Covid Guarantee.

Tickets are available from svr.co.uk

Photo credit: Frank Dumbleton