

Last visiting locomotive announced for Cotswold Festival of Steam

April 3, 2024



Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway (GWSR) has announced the last visiting locomotive for its Cotswold Festival of Steam, which will run from 25 to 27 May 2024 between Cheltenham Racecourse and Broadway.

The visitor is the West Somerset Railway's unique 2-6-0 tender locomotive no. 9351, which is a brand-new conversion from 'Prairie' 2-6-2T tank locomotive no. 5193.

This brings the number of newly-built steam locomotives appearing at the event to three. GWSR added that it would be the first time three newly-built steam locomotives have appeared in steam together on a heritage railway.

The 'new builds' are:

- West Somerset Railway's unique 2-6-0 'Mogul' no. 9351, converted from a 5101-class 2-6-2T tank locomotive, completed in 2004.

- Didcot Railway Centre replica 'Saint' class 4-6-0 no. 2999 Lady of Legend, completed in 2019. 77 members of the 'Saint' class were built between 1902 and 1913, none survived with the last being scrapped in 1953.
- • 6880 Grange Society replica 'Grange' class 4-6-0 no. 6880 Betton Grange, completed in April 2024. 80 members of the 'Grange' class were built between 1936 and 1939, the last being withdrawn and scrapped in 1965.

The three locomotives have been chosen to fit the event's theme, 'Western Workhorses', and join the GWSR's own fleet of two-cylinder Great Western Railway-designed locomotives.

GWSR added that this is also the first time all existing GWR two-cylinder 4-6-0 types have appeared together. The 'Saint' and 'Grange' will join the railway's home-based 'Modified Hall' class no. 7903 Foremarke Hall, a design developed by Swindon Works from the 'Saint'; and 'Manor' class no. 7820 Dinmore Manor, a smaller and lighter version of the 'Grange'. All these types once regularly worked over the line on which the GWSR today operates.

This is 2-6-0 no. 9351's third visit to a railway other than the West Somerset; over the past 20 years, it has also made two visits to Severn Valley Railway.

Tom Willson, Chairman of the event organising team, said: "This is shaping up to be one of the most spectacular and ambitious Cotswold Festival of Steam events to date: not only the first event to have three new-build Great Western designed locomotives at the same time. I'm so pleased that no. 9351 is coming to the Festival, its first visit to the GWSR and only the second railway other than the West Somerset it has ever visited."

Richard Hiscox, Deputy Head of Mechanical Engineering at the West Somerset Railway, added: "Our 'Mogul' no 9351 was converted from a tank locomotive in order to provide greater water and coal capacity on our long and steeply-graded railway and it has been very successful. In fact, it is a type that Swindon's chief mechanical engineer, G J Churchward, designed and was also considered by his successor C B Collet, but never built. So in that sense, it fills a gap in Great Western Railway history.

"I'm excited to see our engine visit the Cotswolds – that it is joining two other newly-built locomotives makes the occasion even more special."

Home fleet locomotives planned to appear at the event include Churchward 28xx class 2-8-0 heavy-freight locomotive no. 2807, which having been built in 1905 is the oldest Great Western-designed locomotive in working order. Its successor, 2884 class 2-8-0 no. 3850, is close to the end of an extensive overhaul started at Toddington in 2015 and will run if completed in time. This could be its first public appearance since overhaul.

Tom added: "This spectacular show is a real feast of Great Western two-cylinder power. These types of locomotives were the real 'Western Workhorses' handling both freight and passenger traffic throughout the Great Western Railway's network. It's a unique opportunity to enjoy such a variety of motive power that recall the locomotives that once could be seen day in, day out on the railway we now call the GWSR.

And, uniquely, it's the first time that all types of GWR two-cylinder 4-6-0s locomotives will have appeared together." He added, however, that all locomotives are subject to availability at the time.

The final home fleet locomotive appearing, bringing the total to an expected eight, is the large and popular Toddington-based Southern Railway three-cylinder Merchant Navy class pacific no. 35006 *Peninsular & Oriental SN Co*, which once handled the heaviest expresses between London Waterloo and Exeter – making it very much the 'odd man out' at the Festival.

'Early Bird' tickets are available until 22 April on the GWSR's website at

<https://gwsr.vticket.co.uk/section.php/173/1/>