

'Posters from the Steam Age' on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway – 18th and 19th September

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The work of acclaimed artist Laurence Fish, whose studio was latterly in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, will be celebrated at the [Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway's](#) (GWSR) Winchcombe station over the weekend of 18th and 19th September*.

The event was postponed from May 2020 and again from July this year, thanks to continuing COVID restrictions.

Three new short films by local cinematographer Richard Suckling, celebrating the railway and aviation art of Laurence Fish, will also be screened during the event.

Laurence Fish was the last of a long line of celebrated artists commissioned to create art to promote compelling destinations served by rail on outdoor posters. His images, produced in the 1960s as the age of steam was coming to an end, were displayed throughout the UK and Europe and are now sought-after collectors' items. They are evocative reminders of the days when many families enjoyed travelling by train

to their holiday resorts.

He became one of the most versatile artists of the 20th century, starting his artistic career designing coachwork for bespoke coupé and saloon cars for the likes of Alvis, Bentley and Delahaye. During the War, his illustrative skills were sought after, particularly in counter-sabotage work for MI5 – producing sectional drawings showing the internal workings of lethal explosive devices and booby-trapped bombs to enable them to be safely detected and defused. Some of these drawings, including an exploding bar of chocolate, will be displayed during the event at Winchcombe station on 18th and 19th September.

After the War, Laurence Fish went on to an acclaimed career as a commercial artist, skilfully creating almost photographic-quality images of aircraft for magazines and aircraft makers as well as scenes promoting industry including oil, civil engineering and, of course, rail travel.

Jean Bray, the late artist's wife who is putting on the show in conjunction with the GWSR, said: "It was in poster art for British Railways that Laurence perhaps made his mark with some stunning if idealised paintings of holiday destinations, frequently featuring attractive 'pin-up' girls. That would never be permitted today.

"Most were produced in full colour while he created compelling duo-tone images too, for example promoting the Pullman services of the Southern Region.

"Such posters were a very familiar sight throughout the country but originals are extremely rare today and often command four-figure sums at specialist railwayana or art auctions. One of his posters won the 1960 National Outdoor Advertising Award."

She added: "It's a case of third time lucky as this show has been postponed twice already. I'm really looking forward to what will be a showcase of Laurence's work."

Jean Bray has produced a beautiful fine-art book: 'Pick Up a Pencil', crammed with hundreds of reproductions of Laurence Fish's commercial as well as fine art in watercolour and oils. She will be signing copies of the book during the event.

She adds: "Laurence was a romantic with an eager, inquiring mind which really translated into his art. Nevertheless, he was also quite a modest and private man which is perhaps why he isn't as well-known as he should be."

Richard Johnson, chairman of GWSR Plc which operates the popular Cheltenham Racecourse-Broadway heritage railway commented: "I'm thrilled that at the third attempt, we can do something to promote the work of Laurence Fish through the 'Posters from the Steam Age' exhibition, especially as during his later years his studio was in Winchcombe.

"Whether his posters appeared on our railway stations I'm not sure as the stations were closed from 1960 just as Laurence's work was being widely commissioned by British Railways, so this is a chance to right that omission!"

The event is free to enter and takes place in the new Tim Mitchell building on Platform 1 of Winchcombe Station. As car parking is very limited, it is best to travel by train to Winchcombe station – just as Laurence Fish’s posters urged people to do – from Cheltenham Racecourse, Toddington or Broadway. Full details of train services and fares can be found on www.gwsr.com.

* While it is expected that there will be no further lockdown in the immediate future, the show is nevertheless dependent on any further Government guidance on public events.

Photo credit: Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway