

Stephenson's iconic Rocket arrives at Locomotion in Shildon

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The world-renowned locomotive, Rocket, designed by George and Robert Stephenson has gone on display at Locomotion in Shildon, County Durham after travelling to the museum earlier this week.

The original 1829 locomotive which was built in Newcastle, travelled to Shildon by road on Wednesday 1 March and temporarily leaves its former home at the National Railway Museum in York.

The move allows Rocket to remain on display to the public while repair work is completed at the National Railway Museum's Station Hall – as part of the museum's Vision 2025 development.

It will be the first time that Rocket has visited Locomotion, and it will join legends of the steam age such as Timothy Hackworth's Sans Pareil and Locomotion No. 1. – the first time the trio of early locomotives have been on display together.

Rocket was entered into and won the Rainhill Trials, a competition held to find the best design of steam locomotive for the historically significant Liverpool & Manchester Railway. It was built in Newcastle at Robert Stephenson and Co., the world's first locomotive workshop, which celebrates its bicentenary later

this year.

Rocket will go on display next to Sans Pareil and visitors will be able to see it for free from Friday 3 March.

Dr Sarah Price, Head of Locomotion, said: “We are delighted to welcome such a well-known locomotive to the museum, especially one with such strong connections to the North East. I am excited for our visitors to see Rocket here in Shildon and I’m sure it will become a star object for our visitors very quickly.”

The delicate move was carried out by the museum’s conservation team and specialist contractors, Constantine, who also moved Rocket to the National Railway Museum in 2019.

Rocket’s chimney was first removed before the locomotive and chimney were carefully packed into a wooden crate which then travelled on the back of a lorry to Shildon.

On arrival the locomotive was slowly unloaded and moved into Locomotion on a skate designed to spread the engine’s load and minimise the chances of any damage.

The locomotive move took place while the museum was open to the public with visitors getting the chance to see Rocket, from a safe distance, as it arrived in its new home.

The move comes at an exciting time for Locomotion with the beginning of construction work on its 2,000m² ‘New Hall’ which will house an additional 46 vehicles from the national collection. The vehicles will include carriages, wagons and locomotives and will celebrate the North East’s role in the development of the railways.

Rocket will be located in Locomotion’s existing building alongside more than 50 rail vehicles already on display.

New Hall, which will open in autumn 2023, is part of Locomotion’s Vision 2025 project which will also see the conservation and restoration of the historic Shildon site. You can find out more about the project here: www.locomotion.org.uk/about-us/our-future-vision-2025

Photo credit: National Railway Museum/ Jason Hynes