



# FIRST IN HISTORY

**LNER**  
LONDON NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY



## LNER comes into existence

LNER was born from the merger of seven constituent and 26 subsidiary railway companies.

It possessed roughly 7,700 locomotives, 20,000 coaches, and 313,500 goods and services vehicles.

Soon it didn't just operate railways but became one of the largest owners of docks in the UK, operating 58 seagoing steamers, and 285 miles of canal.

Additionally, it operated 285 motor vehicles, nearly 7,000 horse-drawn vehicles, and 23 hotels.

With an initial route mileage of 6,590 miles, LNER was the second-largest railway company in Britain.

## LNER'S first choral performance

LNER's Musical Society, composed of amateur male-voice choirs, performed their first choir concert at London's Queen's Hall.

The choir consisted of groups from Cambridge, Grimsby, Ipswich, Norwich, and York, representing the LNER network.

Throughout the 1930s, the renowned conductor, Leslie Woodgate, led the group as its musical director.

## LNER breaks records for 'Best Kept Stations'

On 16 May 1939, LNER's committee of Superintendents and Passenger Managers noted a record number of entries in the "Best Kept Stations" competition, with 746 stations participating.

Since 1923, station staff had maintained and improved their stations, particularly the garden areas, to compete for certificates and the prize money.

## The first non-stop journey from London to Edinburgh

After winning the nation's hearts at the British Empire Exhibition four years earlier, in 1928 Flying Scotsman was redesigned and refitted with a new tender featuring a corridor, meaning crews could take over service without stopping. On 1 May 1928, Flying Scotsman made the first ever non-stop run from London to Edinburgh, which reduced the journey time to just eight hours.

## The first mechanised goods train yard

In the early decades of the 20th Century, Britain's coal and minerals were transported on the East Coast Main Line from the north and had to be allocated to onward destinations. So, in 1929, LNER opened the first mechanised goods train marshalling yard in Britain, near March in Cambridgeshire. Whitemoor Yard was called an 'up' yard, because it was on the north side of the railway, and it was also the biggest in Britain, covering 68 acres and 50 miles of track.

The size of the site transformed the efficiency of LNER's goods operations, with a wagon capacity of 3,311 far exceeding that of other local yards. A 'down' yard was added in 1933.

## Designing LNER's first ever Pride livery

Elliot joined LNER as a designer only a couple of years ago, and has made history already by creating the trainline's first ever LGBTQIA+ livery, marking Pride 2023. Responsible for the whole design from concept to delivery, Elliot's goal was to create something that represented everyone in the community, showing commitment to support and be an ally to those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

It was to signify inclusivity for everyone, with eight flags on each carriage representing each community, along with bright and vibrant colours to bring it to life. With the design going down as an iconic train, the train will be travelling up and down the country for years to come – a true career highlight for Elliot and a fantastic moment for LNER.

## The BBC's first female war correspondent makes history

Audrey Russell, a trailblazing reporter and the BBC's first female news reporter, made history as the first accredited female war correspondent.

In a revolutionary moment, she became the first woman to travel on the footplate of an East Coast Main Line express between London and Edinburgh while reporting for the Woman's Hour programme on the BBC.

Accompanied by driver F. Deely, Audrey Russell's journey marked a momentous milestone for women in journalism and transportation.

## The first journey of The Silver Jubilee

To honour 25 years of the reign of King George V, LNER unveiled Britain's first streamlined train, The Silver Jubilee. It was the height of comfort and luxury, with a first-class section that featured maple panelling, silk curtains and soft cushions. On 30 September 1935, it made its inaugural journey between Newcastle and London, but this stylish silver train was already a record breaker.

Three days earlier, during a trial run between London King's Cross and Grantham, Lincolnshire, it reached a maximum speed of 112.5mph, which was a UK record at the time.

## Flying Scotsman's first all female crew

Flying Scotsman is one of the most iconic trains in British railway history and has an impressive list of pioneering achievements. In March 2020, to celebrate International Women's Day, it marked a significant milestone by operating for the first time with an all-female crew, including four sisters who work for the business.

The iconic LNER Flying Scotsman service rebranded as Flying Scotswoman throughout the month. The objective was to inspire more women to contemplate a career in rail as 85% of working-age women in the UK had not considered a rail industry career.

Departing at 05:40 for Newcastle and London King's Cross, the women filled positions from driver to train manager to chef.

## Red Hot Chilli Pipers 125 mph performance

One of the most well-known bagpipe bands in the country made history by being the first bagpipe act to perform a gig on a newly launched Azuma train – travelling at 125mph.

The Red Hot Chilli Pipers are famous for their infectious style of feel-good music, fusing traditional Scottish tunes with rock and pop anthems. They delighted customers with their own unique rendition of Queen's 'We Will Rock You', to mark one of the first trips of the new fleet.

## First time an 8-foot cuddly bear boarded as a passenger

In Christmas 2020, LNER made a very special delivery to a little girl in Leuchars on the East Coast of Scotland. An urgent and slightly hopeful request came in through social media: A man had bought a present for his niece up in Scotland but was having difficulties getting it to her in time for Christmas Day. Although this wasn't just any bear – it was an 8' giant teddy bear, in fact.

LNER immediately came to the rescue. Cameron Stanwick, a Social Media Specialist at the railway provider, volunteered to meet the man and his special bear at York Station, while behind-the-scenes the team had arranged to transport it all the way up north.

Mr. Bear was treated to First Class service on his 181-mile journey along the East Coast, much to the delight of the little girl's dad, who collected it upon arrival. Christmas was saved.

## The first journey of the Flying Scotsman

On 24 February 1923, the first train of the newly-formed LNER left London King's Cross: the Number 1472 from London to Edinburgh, a luxurious passenger steam train that would go on to become a star.

The following year, it featured in the British Empire Exhibition and was nicknamed Flying Scotsman, after the 10:00 London to Edinburgh service that ran daily, starting in 1862. Designed by Sir Nigel Gresley and built in Doncaster, it was part of the A1 class of locomotives, which were the most powerful used by LNER at the time. Flying Scotsman would outclass the rest to become the most famous steam locomotive in the world, breaking records and clocking up an estimated 2.5 million miles in its lifetime.

## The first Black train driver in Britain

Wilston Samuel Jackson, who drove for LNER, was Britain's first black train driver. Known to colleagues, friends and family as Bill, he was born in Jamaica in 1927 and moved to the UK in the early 1950s.

After arriving in the UK, Wilston persevered with his dream to be a train driver, firstly taking on a role as cleaner, then a fireman and finally became a driver. He then went on to drive some of the most famous locomotives of all: Flying Scotsman and Mallard. Despite breaking both of his legs in an accident early on in his career, he continued to drive trains across the LNER route and in his spare time, he helped other black drivers study for their exams. He died in 2018 aged 91, but his legacy continues with a special blue plaque at London King's Cross, commemorating his remarkable achievements and dedication to the railway.

His daughters Molly and Polly continue his legacy today, never giving up and always standing up for who they are and what they believe is right.

## LNER's Coronation train for King Charles III

On 6 May, a very special train entered service between London King's Cross and Edinburgh Waverley – marking the Coronation of King Charles III.

The 'Carolean Express' set off from the iconic London station at 11:00 on the day of the King's Coronation. The era of British history under King Charles III will be known as the Carolean era, the same name that was given to the eras of both King Charles I and II.

Over the century, LNER has named trains and services to mark important royal occasions including 'Coronation', 'The Elizabethan', 'Silver Jubilee' and 'Queen of Scots'.

## LNER's first Holiday Handbook

In April 1929, LNER released the first edition of its Holiday Handbook.

At the cost of a mere sixpence, buyers received 1,140-pages of recommendations on where to visit and stay on the LNER network.

The company's staff magazine hailed it as 'the biggest holiday guide ever published.'

The handbook was popular with 50,000 copies selling out instantly, prompting LNER to order additional handbooks.

## **LNER transports millions to view first total solar eclipse for 203 years**

Described as the most significant natural event of the century, this particular total solar eclipse spurred the largest rail-based mobilisation in history, with over 3 million people vying for a glimpse. This was the first time in 203 years that the phenomenon could be observed from the British mainland.

In response, LNER operated special early morning services destined for the North of England, identified as the optimal viewing location. These services, known as 'eclipse excursion' trains, transported customers who later travelled by road to designated viewing sites. Expectations ran high as they were cautioned that the next opportunity to witness such a spectacle wouldn't come until 1999.

Despite their best efforts, a thick band of clouds rolled in at the crucial moment, obscuring the much-anticipated celestial display. Although the typical British weather had spoiled the party, the cheery atmosphere continued.

## **Forth Bridge LNER poster sold for first time at auction**

A selection of vintage railway posters, each featuring Scottish tourist destinations, was successfully auctioned, raising significant funds for charity.

One standout piece, 'Over the Forth to the North' designed by Henry George Gawthorn, fetched a remarkable £12,600.

The artwork portrayed a beautifully drawn picture of the iconic Forth Bridge which crosses the Firth of Forth, just north of Edinburgh.

Henry George Gawthorn was a master of rare lithographic posters and served as a commercial artist for LNER from 1934 to 1950. His work beautifully captured the golden era of rail travel, illustrating iconic destinations across the East Coast.

## **Historic LNER Coronation Express 'Beavertail' Observation Car returns to Highlands for first time in 55 years**

Railways have always been a scenic way to travel, and the iconic Beavertail Observation Cars were one of the finest ways to appreciate the world outside. These unique carriages, designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, came with huge windows on three sides and made their first appearance as part of the Coronation service on the East Coast Main Line between 1937 and 1939.

Fast forward to 1956, and these special carriages were transferred to the West Highland line, where they continued to serve until the 1960s. They were refurbished for the Strathspey Railway to run on its 10-mile route through the Cairngorms - offering panoramic views of the Spey valley and the Cairngorm Mountains.

The Beavertail, named after its unique shape, still adorns its original 1937 Art Deco interior.

## **A UK engineering first as an 11,000 tonne tunnel is installed**

A UK engineering first occurred on the East Coast Main Line in 2021 as a huge 11,000-tonne curved concrete box was installed in a meticulous nine-day operation.

The structure, which weighs more than the Eiffel Tower, led to engineers spending nine months undergoing construction in the tunnel as trains rolled past between London and Edinburgh.

The construction was pushed into place along pre-installed guiding supports, after the three tracks above were temporarily removed. The traditional way of installing a tunnel would involve closing it completely for about a month, but the pre-constructed structure was installed in just nine days.

The work took place at Werrington, north of Peterborough, where the East Coast Main Line is crossed by a slow-moving east-west freight route.

## Mallards reunited for first time

Six iconic heavyweight locomotives were reunited to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the speed record set by the world-famous Mallard.

The Mallard, one of 35 almost identical A4-class locomotives, was designed by renowned engineer Sir Nigel Gresley – the man also behind Flying Scotsman.

On 3 July 1938, the Mallard (officially designated No.4468) thundered along Stoke Bank near Grantham, Lincolnshire at 126 mph – a speed that has remained unmatched by any steam locomotive for three-quarters of a century.

To celebrate the milestone achievement, the Mallard was reunited with its surviving sister locomotives – the Dominion of Canada, the Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Union of South Africa, the Sir Nigel Gresley, and the Bittern. The reunion took place on the Great Hall turntable at the National Railway Museum in York.

## The first steam engine built in the UK in 50 years takes to the tracks

In 2008, railway history was made when the Tornado, the first steam locomotive constructed in Britain in nearly fifty years, took to the tracks. The Tornado, a model that disappeared from the network in the 1960s, was the result of 18 years of dedicated work by rail enthusiasts.

Their dream came true when the engine transported its first customers on the historic Great Central Railway in Loughborough, Leicestershire. The construction of the Tornado was made possible by the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, a group of rail devotees based in Darlington, who managed to raise nearly three million pounds for the project.

The design of the Tornado is based on the Pacific locomotives conceived by Arthur H. Peppercorn for the London and North Eastern Railway in the late 1950s. The famously powerful locomotives were constructed in Darlington and Doncaster. They were the last in the line of the “thoroughbred express” series on the East Coast Main Line.

## Sunderland’s first FA Cup train

Sunderland A.F.C had reached only their second ever FA Cup final in 1937 and were hoping for the club’s first ever cup win.

After comfortably defeating Preston North End 3-1, the team travelled home from Wembley in a very special train, which carried the “Sunderland” nameplates over the middle two of its locomotive’s six, 6’ 8” wheels.

It was promised to the North East side should they reach an FA Cup final, much to the delight of fans and players alike.

On the FA Cup Final day, it became clear that the Sunderland train wasn’t available so its sister locomotive, Derby, was drafted in and the name plates swapped. There was so much celebration that it’s unlikely the club knew, or cared. But the secret came to light many years later.

## Darlington Railway Station introduces its first piano

Darlington Railway Station installed a piano for customers to enjoy musical renditions while they wait for their train.

The idea came from a local company, Ingrams Removals, after one of its partners was inspired by popular medleys he had seen in a documentary about bustling London railway stations.

The piano, a 1920s Hemingway, was generously donated when its owner found themselves unable to accommodate it any longer.

Since its placement in the station, it has become a much-loved fixture, with talented customers routinely playing on the piano.