

Embsay Newlines Extra – The Wheldale Appeal

Return Wheldale to Steam!

History

Wheldale is a member of a class of locomotives known as 'Austerities'. The Austerity is an 0-6-0 saddle tank locomotive designed by the Hunslet Engine Company of Leeds and adopted by the War Department (WD) as one of their standard locomotives.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the War Department had initially chosen the LMS 3F 0-6-0T as its standard shunting locomotive, but was persuaded by Hunslet that a simplified version of their 50550 design would be more suitable.

The first Austerity was completed in 1943 and they saw use all over Europe following D-Day.

A total of 377 WD locomotives were built by a number of different locomotive builders including Andrew Barclay Sons & Co., W. G. Bagnall, Hudswell Clarke, Robert Stephenson and Hawthorns and the Vulcan Foundry.

Post-war, 75 of these locomotives became the LNER J94 Class while and as the final War Department locomotives were being delivered, the National Coal Board was placing orders for identical locomotives to be used at collieries. Between 1948 and 1964, 77 new "Austerity" locomotives were built for the NCB.

In 1952 the Army needed more locomotives for military depots, so it ordered 14 locomotives to supplement the 90 that it had retained.

Hunslet undertook the rebuilding of many NCB locomotives and when the Army started to sell off locomotives again in 1959, they bought 15 examples that were to be rebuilt and sold on. The NCB bought 13 of these, the 14th was sold directly into preservation and the final locomotive was scrapped without being rebuilt.

Ultimately a total of 485 Austerities were constructed between 1943 and 1964.

The NCB continued to use Austerities in the 1970s and a small number remained in service until the early 1980s, notably No S134 at Wheldale Colliery which, in 1982, was placed on loan to the Yorkshire Dales Railway Museum Trust – the last operating steam locomotive in the Yorkshire coalfields.



S134 Wheldale

'Wheldale' was built by the Hunslet Engine Company in 1944 for the WD before being sold to the NCB.

The locomotive came to Embsay directly from NCB service at Wheldale Colliery in 1982, bringing with her Driver Colin Davies who remains her greatest supporter.

Ownership

The ownership details are that 'Wheldale' is the property of the Yorkshire Dales Railway Museum Trust (Holdings) Ltd (YDRMT).

Wheldale had been 'on loan' to the YDRMT but the steam locomotives loaned by the NCB into preservation had their ownership transferred to the National Coal Mining Museum for England as the most appropriate body when the NCB, and later British Coal, ceased to exist.

Luckily, we were offered the locomotive and were able to buy Wheldale some years ago.

The future.....

There is a strong determination to return 'Wheldale' to active service on our Railway and a programme of fundraising has begun.

The locomotive has now been moved to the Duke's Siding Dock at Bolton Abbey where she can be seen and admired by our passengers who then may be enticed into making a donation to the fund.

Fundraising

A number of fundraising methods are being pursued in order to reach the £100,000 target that we have set ourselves. The first three in place are:

- It has been decided that the money raised through the 'easyfundraising' initiative will go directly to the Wheldale Appeal (so don't forget to register and use 'easyfundraising' whenever you buy on-line).
- Posters and collection boxes have been provided for around the locomotive in the Duke's Dock.
- We propose setting up a monthly payment scheme, by Standing Order, for supporters of the locomotive to pledge an amount each month towards the target. A form is included with this extra Newlines so please do consider supporting the fundraising in this way.

Regular updates as to progress will be included in Newlines, just as we do for the ongoing Platform 2 Appeal.