

Press release: 25/2/2019



A first for the Lake District: Transport Trust 'Red Wheel' Plaque awarded to Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway

A major visitor attraction in the Western Lake District, Cumbria has been granted a prestigious national award in recognition of its historical importance.



Located in only coastal village in the UNESCO World Heritage site the Lake District National Park [Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway](#) has been awarded the first Red Wheel plaque, the only one of its kind in Cumbria, by the [Transport Trust](#). The Red Wheel scheme commemorates and celebrates transport sites of significant historical value in the United Kingdom. The Transport Trust promotes and encourages the preservation and restoration of Britain's unique transport heritage in all its forms across road, rail, wings and water.

The plaque was unveiled at a special ceremony on the 23 February by **Eric Robson**, eminent writer, broadcaster and Chairman of **Cumbria Tourism**. Also in attendance on the day were **Colonel Paul Brook** from the Transport Trust.

The award means that the diminutive railway joins around 108 sites of importance around the UK such as Birkenhead Street Tramway, where the first passenger street tramway in Britain was inaugurated in 1860 by George Francis Train, the birthplace of Barnes Wallis who was the Aeronautical Engineer and Inventor who designed the Bouncing Bomb and the

Metropolitan Railway's Baker Street Station in London which was the first underground station to be opened in 1863.

Since opening the railway has carried minerals and passengers on three different gauges of track; standard, 3 foot and 15 inch. Built in 1873 and opening commercially in 1875, the Railway's initial purpose was to transport iron ore, that was being mined in the hills above the village of Boot, down to Ravenglass where it could be transferred onto the Furness Railway's mainline to Barrow. In 1876 the Railway opened to passenger traffic and these trains ran on the narrow gauge of 3ft making Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway the first public narrow gauge Railway in England.

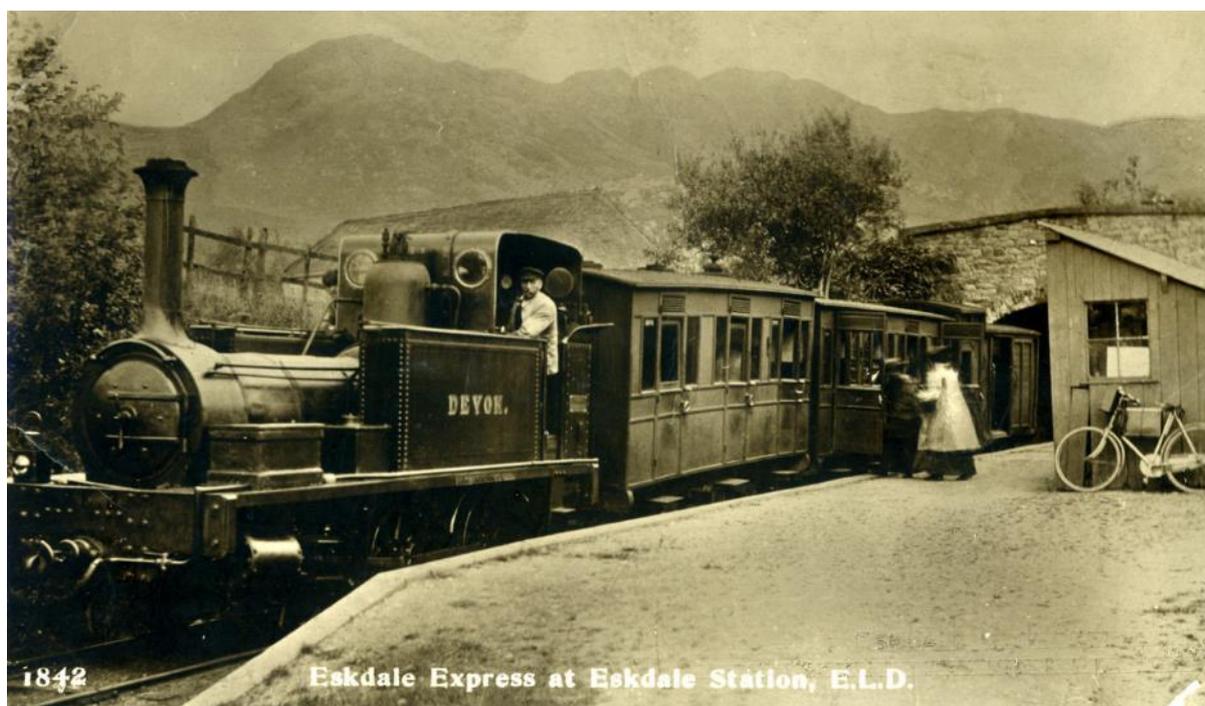


It was in April 1913 that the original 3ft line closed and in 1915 the new 15in La'al Ratty was born when miniature railway engineer and prolific model makers WJ Bassett-Lowke and R Proctor-Mitchell, (representing Narrow Gauge Railways Ltd) acquired the Railway line as a base for testing their little locomotives. The line was also used to transport granite between Beckfoot Quarry and Murthwaite crushing plant and for a while the line from Murthwaite to Ravenglass the track ran as dual gauge, with a 4 foot 8 ½ inch standard track straddling the 15 inch gauge rails. Visitors can discover more about the railway's rich history at the **Museum at Ravenglass Station.**

It is an auspicious year to receive the plaque, one that sees the celebration of several significant birthdays for several of the trains with a **Big Birthday Gala** (4-6 May), a series of mini events will take place across the weekend including short tours of Murthwaite Quarry, a commentary trip in the new observation carriage, a photography evening and much more.

Martin Cookman Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway Operations Manager says, '*Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway are honoured to receive this Red Wheel Plaque. It is testament to the huge contribution the railway has made to the community in Cumbria and to the nation. As the first narrow-gauge railway in England 'Ratty' has a special place in the hearts of many generations and we look forward to welcoming our passengers back for the Spring season on 16 February.*

Peter Stone, Transport Trust, says ‘*Britain has led the world in transport developments from as early as the 18th century, enabling the Industrial Revolution and the growth of the British Empire. Fortunately, traces of many of these developments can still be found and the Trust is committed to drawing these to the attention of a wider, younger audience. Our 'Red Wheel' programme lists over 800 heritage sites on its website and, at the most important of these, we erect prestigious commemorative plaques. The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway has a fascinating history and the Transport Trust is pleased to award it a 'Red Wheel' in recognition.*



[END]

To arrange a press trip please contact: Sorcha Hunter PR & Content Executive Cumbria Tourism | shunter@cumbriatourism.org | 01539 825019

Photos: All cleared and rights free for press and publicity use. Photo credit: Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway.

1. Eric Robson unveils the 1st Red Wheel Plaque for Cumbria at Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway on Saturday 23 February
2. Northern Rock with driver at Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway
3. Historical photo of the Eskdale Express at the Eskdale station in 1842

Editors notes

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway is a family-owned business operating a heritage, narrow gauge steam railway on the Western Coast of the Lake District. The railway is surrounded by stunning views and walks and is based in Ravenglass, the only coastal village in the Lake District National Park. The business's awards include a Silver Green Tourism award, Coach Tourism's 2015 Heritage Railway award, Cumbria Tourism's 2015 Large Visitor Attraction of the Year award among many others. <https://ravenglass-railway.co.uk/>

