

A HOME FOR WELLS: EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO PURCHASE "CITY OF WELLS"

The East Lancashire Railway has today announced its ambitions to purchase current visiting steam locomotive Ex-Southern Region Bulleid 'West Country' Light Pacific 4-6-2 No. 34092 "City of Wells" from its existing owners for an undisclosed sum.

"City of Wells" was built in 1949 at Brighton Works and spent its early life hauling express passenger trains on the Southern Region of British Railway, even working the "Golden Arrow" luxury boat train from London to Dover. This West Country Class was withdrawn from service in November 1964 and sent to Woodham Brothers Scrapyard in Barry Island, where it remained for seven years until it was purchased by its current owners, Richard Greenwood, Graham Bentley and John Adams, in 1971 and brought to the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway. Since then, the loco, which returned to service in 1979, has worked all over the country on special charters and, following the completion of its 25 year restoration in 2014, has been a popular visiting engine at the East Lancashire Railway.

This magnificent locomotive has recently been put up for sale by her owners and her future destiny is now in doubt. Negotiations with the owners has seen an agreement reached for the East Lancashire Railway to try to purchase "City of Wells", however the railway, a registered charity and predominantly volunteer run organisation, now needs to raise £340,920 towards these costs before the end of 2018.

With the future of the railway reliant on its ability to be self-sufficient, the addition of "City of Wells" will not only lighten-the-load on an already stretched home fleet, but will provide a loving, lifelong haven for the legendary locomotive.

East Lancashire Railway Chairman, Mike Kelly, said:

"Over the past two years we have been honoured to host "City of Wells", who since her arrival in July 2015 has become a stalwart of the railway's locomotive line-up. Come rain or shine, from snowy Santa Specials and haunted Halloween services to Steam Galas and luxury diners, "Wells" has proudly represented the railway and done her bit for our cause and community. She has looked after us and it's now time for us to look after her. The locomotive has resided in the North West for many years, and with the help of our supporters, we can ensure she stays here for many more!

As a not-for-profit organisation we simply do not have the funds to secure the engine's future, which is why we are calling upon the support of our railway family to give "Wells" the home she deserves.

Please visit our Preservation for Generations website and read about the "A Home for Wells" appeal and just how important this cause is. We appreciate all support, and any donations received, however small, will be one more precious step to our target of securing this heritage locomotive for now and for the future generations of volunteers and visitors."

The current owners of 34092 said:

"We are delighted to have agreed terms for the sale of 34092 to the East Lancashire Railway.

After forty-seven of ownership, during which time we have enjoyed some wonderful years of main line and heritage railway operation, not to mention the challenges of restoration and renewal, we realise that it's now time to hand on to new owners, given that we're not getting any younger and would be unable to fund the cost of the next major overhaul. It is somewhat sobering to remember that BR were its owners for a mere fifteen years.

Since being based at Bury over the last two years, we have come to recognise the E.L.R. as a progressive railway with the right developing skills and facilities which give us the confidence that the long-term future of Wells will be secure.

We shall always be grateful to our friends and colleagues at the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway for having provided 34092 with a home for most of our years as owners."

For more information on the "Home for Wells" fundraising project and to make a donation visit www.preservationforgenerations.co.uk.

ENDS

Information to Editors

The East Lancashire Railway operates a 12-mile route between Heywood and Rawtenstall, using a range of preserved steam and diesel locomotives to haul vintage train services through the scenic Irwell Valley. The railway, a registered charity and predominantly volunteer run organisation, is one of the North West's most popular tourist attractions, welcoming over 200,000 visitors each year.

The railway's current home steam fleet consists of Ex-Burnley Gas Works 0-4-0ST No. I, Ex-Manchester Ship Canal 0-6-0T No. 32 Gothenburg and LMS Hughes Fowler 'Crab' 2-6-0 No. 13065.

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