



13 March 2023
PR/RPJ/04-23

PRESS RELEASE

A year of celebration and a special Gala planned

The volunteers and staff of the Yorkshire Dales Railway Museum Trust, the owner and operator of the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway, have much to look forward to in 2023, this being the 25th anniversary of the railway being extended through to Bolton Abbey in preservation, thus creating the nearly 5-mile railway that we all enjoy today.

Whilst passenger trains started running through to Bolton Abbey in the autumn of 1997, the official re-opening of the line took place, amidst much celebration, on Friday 1 May 1998, with the late Sir William McAlpine as the principal invited guest.

To mark the occasion, the Railway will be staging a special **Mixed Traction Gala Weekend** on Sunday & Bank Holiday Monday **7 & 8 May 2023**.

Detailed planning for the event has already commenced, but is expected to feature all available steam and diesel locomotives in action, including the unique and award-winning North Eastern Railway autocar and trailer, a special timetable in operation on both days, the excellent Stately Trains' vintage carriages and saloons in use, invited guests, a display of rolling stock and a special display of other items of stock.

Full details will be announced in due course, and will be widely published, including on our website – www.ebar.org.uk.

The Mixed Traction Weekend is an integral part of a wide variety of special events planned by the Trust for its 2023 season to appeal to a wide variety of interests, including various family-orientated events – starting with 'Alice in Wonderland' over the Easter weekend, a Vintage Vehicle Rally in June, the ever-popular Beer Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend.....and a new initiative for the festive season.

Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway
Bolton Abbey Station, Bolton Abbey, Skipton BD23 6AF
Tel: 01756 710614
www.emsabayboltonabbeyrailway.org.uk

Trust Director and Press Officer, Richard Jones commented: “The re-opening of the line through to Bolton Abbey not only helped to put our lovely heritage railway ‘on the map’, and was the culmination of a great deal of hard work and commitment by our volunteers. Our Mixed Traction Gala Weekend is not only designed to celebrate this important occasion in our history, but also to celebrate our railway as it is now and how far we have come over those twenty-five years, as well as looking forward to the next 25 years. We have much to be proud of.”

Ends

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A photograph of the late Sir William McAlpine at the official re-opening of the line to Bolton Abbey is enclosed with this press release [Please credit: M.H. Hubbs]. If you would like to receive an ‘exclusive’ image for publication please contact Richard Jones.

NOTES & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The **Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway** (or ‘Yorkshire Dales Railway’ as it was formerly known) is a heritage railway that runs over part of the line that used to run from Skipton and Ilkley. The railway between the two towns was built by the Midland Railway Company and opened in 1888. The line connected with other routes at both Skipton and Ilkley and, as well as local traffic, it was also used as key alternative and diversionary route to relieve congestion on the busy Aire Valley line. The line was originally built with double track, with intermediate stations at Embsay, Bolton Abbey and Addingham. There was one branch, a single-track line from Embsay Junction, half a mile to the west of Embsay station, to Grassington, with an intermediate station at Rylstone.

In 1923 the Midland Railway became part of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway (**‘LMS’**), and twenty-five years later, in 1948, the line was run by British Railways upon nationalisation of the country’s railway network. Like several other railways in Wharfedale, the line became a victim of the ‘Beeching axe’ and – despite vigorous local opposition – the section between Embsay and Ilkley was closed in 1965. The lines from Skipton to Embsay and just short of Grassington were retained for stone traffic from local quarries – the former was subsequently closed, but the latter – running as far as Swinden Quarry – remains open and is used regularly.

In October 1968, a group of people met in Skipton Town Hall to explore the possibility of reopening part of the line, which resulted in the formation of the ‘Embsay and Grassington Railway Preservation Society’, with the aim of using Embsay as an operating base for running steam trains to Grassington. This was thwarted as the Grassington line was retained for stone traffic, so attention was focused on the line between Embsay and Bolton Abbey, with the title ‘Yorkshire Dales Railway Society’ adopted. British Railways allowed the Society to occupy the site at Embsay on a lease arrangement, with the first steam locomotive arriving in 1970. The line was opened in stages – initially in 1979, then to Skibeden (1982), Holywell (1987) – where a new Halt was built – Stoneacre Loop (1991), and finally to Bolton Abbey (1997), giving the line we know today, almost five miles long. By the mid-1990s, the railway had purchased most of the trackbed from just short of Embsay Junction to Bolton Abbey, together with the station sites at both Embsay and Bolton Abbey. At Stoneacre, a Signal Box has been built at the Loop, allowing two trains to run on the line at busy times. Since then, a wide and interesting collection of locomotives and rolling stock have been amassed.

Responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the line is the responsibility of the Yorkshire Dales Railway Museum Trust (Holdings) Limited, a registered charity, museum and company. It has a Trading Company arm that is responsible for the shops and cafes. The Trust is governed by a Board of Directors, who set the policy and strategic direction, and has a small number of employees (full time and part time) in key positions, supplemented by occasional seasonal staff when required, although the railway is largely run by volunteers, who make an immensely valuable contribution towards our success. The Trust has a membership of around 800.

Timetabled passenger trains operate regularly throughout the year, and daily during the peak summer months. In addition, we offer a variety of other services, including our extremely popular ‘Dales Dining’ trains, special events, evening special trains and ‘Experience Days’.

Further information about the railway, and its services and activities, can be found on our website – www.ebar.org.uk.

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