

The Railway Poster in Britain

Dieter W. Hopkin and Beverley Cole

The National Railway Museum

The National Railway Museum (NRM) in York is part of the National Museum of Science and Industry of Britain. It was opened in 1975 and is probably the biggest museum of its type in the world. Its collections are the largest, the most comprehensive, and the most significant in their field anywhere in the world and include 100 locomotives, nearly 200 carriages and wagons and artefacts of every description from uniforms to signalling equipment.

The Museum's Pictorial Collections contain original works of art, paintings, drawings, engravings and other printed material covering more than 150 years of railway history in Britain. Perhaps the strongest collection is that of railway posters. The collection of over 7000 posters covers the whole history of railway advertising from the earliest simple handbills to today's sophisticated examples. This article includes a selection of the

Museum's extensive collection (see pp. 25–28). The story of railways in Britain has been reflected in the development of the railway poster. This art form illustrates the major changes that have occurred in British society over the years and captures the spirit and character of British life over that period. Railway posters also provide historical information about the geographical growth of the network and about the people for whom they were designed. As such, they are material evidence of British culture and are social documents. They illustrate styles in art, the changing patterns of holiday-making, urban and rural landscapes, architecture, fashion, the development of advertising standards, and the approaches and aspirations of companies.

Early Railway Posters

The earliest advertisements of the railways were simple, giving factual information about the services offered. These hand-

bills and notices were similar to those that had been used by the stagecoaches. A simple statement of the services the railways offered was enough to show that they were preferable and often quicker and cheaper. These letterpress posters were produced using standard printing blocks and included no individual graphic design. When illustrative elements were introduced, they were generally standard patterns depicting generic locomotives and carriages that were combined to form trains.

By the 1850s, rivalry between the large number of competing private railway companies resulted in a greater use of advertising to promote alternative services. Another development was the operation of special or excursion trains additional to the timetabled services to provide transport to specific events. These were either arranged by the railway companies or independent travel operators like Thomas Cook, who organized his first railway excursion in 1841.

The first mass advertising of this sort arose



The Newcastle and Carlisle Railway was one of the first railways to advertise its services for popular travel. This particularly early letterpress poster of 1846 promotes cheap fares to travel to a popular sporting event in Carlisle in the north west of England.

(National Railway Museum/ Science & Society Picture Library, U.K.)



Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

The artist Norman Wilkinson working on the artwork for his poster 'Garston, a Merseyside Port' 1924.

(National Railway Museum, U.K.)

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.

from the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. During the 6 months of the Exhibition, it attracted over 6 million visitors, many of whom arrived in London by trains operated by many competing companies. During the 1850s and 1860s, commercial rivalry on a number of principal routes lead to an increase in railway advertising. New, cheaper and more convenient services were promoted. In this climate, more creative posters began to be produced incorporating pictorial designs. Probably the earliest example is a rare poster produced by the London & Dover Railway around 1845; only one example is known to survive and it is in the collections of the NRM. It is probably the first British railway poster that incorporates realistic railway scenes and several colours.

Development of Pictorial Posters

It was not until the 1870s that the real advances in pictorial posters took place. Early coloured posters still predominantly conveyed factual information rather than images. They were often poorly composed, garish and typographically coarse. However, they did lay the foundations for the more creative illustrative posters that were to follow.

Britain's railways did not really make good use of artists for their advertising until the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1905, the London & North Western Railway took the lead in commissioning Norman Wilkinson to produce artwork for a new type of poster that incorporated landscape paintings. The other companies followed this example with varying success. The pictorial railway poster soon developed into a familiar feature of railway stations as the companies tried to entice passengers with an almost endless variety of colourful and evocative images. Some of the finest poster artists of the day were employed to portray the delights and



Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

Railway publicity stands on a show ground in 1909 advertising the services of the London & North Western, Lancashire & Yorkshire, Furness, North Staffordshire, South Eastern & Chatham, Great Western, Midland and Great Central railways.
(National Railway Museum, U.K.)

temptations that lay just a train ride away. The best set new standards for advertising art, while others remained a clutter of text and images. Some posters that combined image and text most successfully were produced by the Great Northern Railway. *Skegness is So Bracing* by John Hassall, which first appeared in 1908 and featured the figure of the *Jolly Fisherman* skipping along the beach, was the most famous, but there were many others and several of the introduced subjects and themes were developed over the years.

Holiday travel

Above all, it was holiday travel that the railway poster came to be associated with—a world of sunshine, sandy beaches and endless fun. Growing prosperity led to increased demand for travel. However, some companies had not always been keen to cater for holiday traffic, but it gradually came to be seen as an important source of revenue. Before the First

World War, the railway companies were fortunate in having few competitors for this traffic. The train was quite simply the best and often the only way to travel.

The rapid growth of seaside resorts owed much to the expansion of the railway network. Sea bathing increased in popularity during the nineteenth century and railways were able to provide fast access from the towns and cities for many more people who had the luxury of leisure time and paid and public holidays. The railways opened up parts of the country which had been previously inaccessible. New resorts sprung up on Britain's coasts. However, the new visitors that the railways brought were not always welcomed with open arms. At Bridlington, in Yorkshire, day visitors were disliked by regular visitors and residents alike and the station was sited well away from the sea. Most of the larger resorts came to cater for all classes of visitor but others tried to retain a more select clientele.

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.

In some cases, railways created resorts where little had existed before. In 1871, Skegness in Lincolnshire had a population of less than 500. A railway line was opened to the town 2 years later and a large station was built with the hope of attracting holiday traffic to the sandy beaches. The crowds came and the facilities grew. By 1907, Skegness was attracting 300,000 visitors a year, mostly from the industrial towns of the East Midlands and Yorkshire.

The Golden Age of the Railway Poster

In 1923, the railway companies were re-organized by the government. The existing 123 private railways were formed into four new companies, known collectively as The Big Four. These were the London, Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS), the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER), the Great Western Railway (GWR) and the Southern Railway (SR). The new arrangements, with four large regional

companies, brought a greater degree of unity to the network and made life easier for the traveller, but the four companies were very different in size and character. The new companies were keen to develop strong corporate images and during the 1920s and 1930s created distinctive in-house styles that were applied to everything associated with the company from locomotives to leaflets. This had a clear impact on advertising and especially posters. The LNER was a leader in graphic design with its use of good artists for its poster illustrations and the development of its distinctive Gill sans serif graphics, named after Eric Gill.

Strong themes emerged that became familiar to the railway traveller; the Southern Railway promoted the South for sunshine either to the English south-coast resorts or Continental Europe and emphasized its modern electric trains with frequent use of the electric flash or spark motif. The LNER promoted the East Coast resorts as *The Drier Side of Britain* and its prestige express trains. The GWR's key-

note was *Speed to the West* while the LMS promoted images reflecting the size of the company and the breadth of its operations. The companies also made use of the history of their operations and the heritage of their operational areas to promote their images.

House styles of The Big Four

All developed their own styles using particular artists and approaches. Each company also had its own distinct branding to depict its title or initials. The GWR button logo or the LNER ellipse are clear examples of this. Because of their need to have popular appeal they reflected the fashion and style of the period. Art deco, abstract, as well as more conventional representational styles, were used. The posters also reflected more general artistic influences from Europe and the Far East.

This period has been referred to as the Golden Age of the railway poster. Artists such as Cassandre, Edward McKnight Kauffer, Fred Taylor, and Tom Purvis produced extremely fine work during this time and railway advertising provides some of the best examples of contemporary commercial art. During this period, graphic or commercial artists became acknowledged and recognized as a legitimate field of artistic endeavour. A general awareness that commercial design needed to be taught in art schools alongside fine art was becoming more accepted. However, this flourishing of commercial art was not achieved in a vacuum and the development of the railway poster during the 1920s and 1930s was a gradual and sometimes difficult process.

Great Western Railway

The GWR was the only company that existed before the advent of The Big Four in 1923. It had never been noted for the quality of its posters and the first efforts of the enlarged GWR were hardly inspiring. Unlike the other companies, it did not



Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

LMS posters advertising the company's services associated with the 1927 exhibition of the Royal Scot, a new locomotive. The posters include Norman Wilkinson's *Building an Engine*, advertisements for Christmas and New Year excursions, the resort of Colwyn Bay, and golfing holidays. (National Railway Museum, U.K.)

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.

suffer a major upheaval in 1923. It continued much as before and this applied as much to publicity as to its other areas of activity. Its strengths carried over, but so did its weaknesses. In posters, the weaknesses included over-reliance on printing firms and the frequent concern for economy, resulting in designs of poor quality.

Improvements came and in 1933, a series of six posters of Devon and Cornwall was commissioned from the American designer Edward McKnight Kauffer. He was highly regarded by the new school of poster artists and by the critics. His posters of Devon and Cornwall caused much comment but were not to everyone's taste. Further innovation followed in 1936 with the appearance of a series of posters by Ronald Lampitt in an unusual mosaic style.

Southern Railway

Life was not so easy for the Southern Railway. Relations between its three constituent companies had never been good and it took some time to establish a degree of unity.

The first advertisement in a newspaper campaign appeared under the heading 'The Truth about the Southern' and reviewed the role and achievements of its constituent companies during the First World War. Details of suburban electrification and the building of new steam locomotives shared space with accounts of how carriages were cleaned and the difficulties of dealing with rush-hour traffic. John Elliot, SR's advertising manager, saw improvement of press relations as equally important. He opened an Information Section at Waterloo, London that reporters were free to visit and provided regular articles and information. He paid particular attention to suburban and evening newspapers as these had been responsible for much criticism of the railway. The new approach to press relations was extremely successful.

Many stations were rebuilt and modernized, and as both services and facilities improved, the number of passengers increased. London was easier to reach and it became possible to live well away from the city yet still commute comfortably. Much advertising was aimed at the commuter but the SR was also keen to promote off-peak travel by shoppers and theatregoers. The SR image was transformed during these years. The slogan 'Southern Electric', coupled with the distinctive electric flash motif, was used on stations, bridges and posters to advertise the new network.

This new image did not mean that the traditional area of holiday publicity was neglected and the SR developed its own style in advertising resorts both at home and abroad. Much of its output was brash and unsophisticated, but highly effective. The 'Southern Coast' was promoted as the sunshine coast and colourful characters were used to reinforce this theme.

London, Midland and Scottish

The LMS was a very different railway from the SR but it too got off to a difficult start. Not only were there tensions between several of the constituent companies, but there were also problems in bringing together such a vast and diverse system. It had inherited some good practices from constituent companies like the LNWR that had employed Norman Wilkinson, but its early products were simply the results of carrying on the policies of the earlier companies.

However, the LMS soon developed a new policy for poster advertising. It commissioned three posters from the artist Norman Wilkinson and asked for his views on how its advertising could be improved. Wilkinson proposed that to raise standards, members of the Royal Academy should be asked to design a series of posters for the company. Eighteen artists were approached by Wilkinson and all, with the exception of Frank Brangwyn

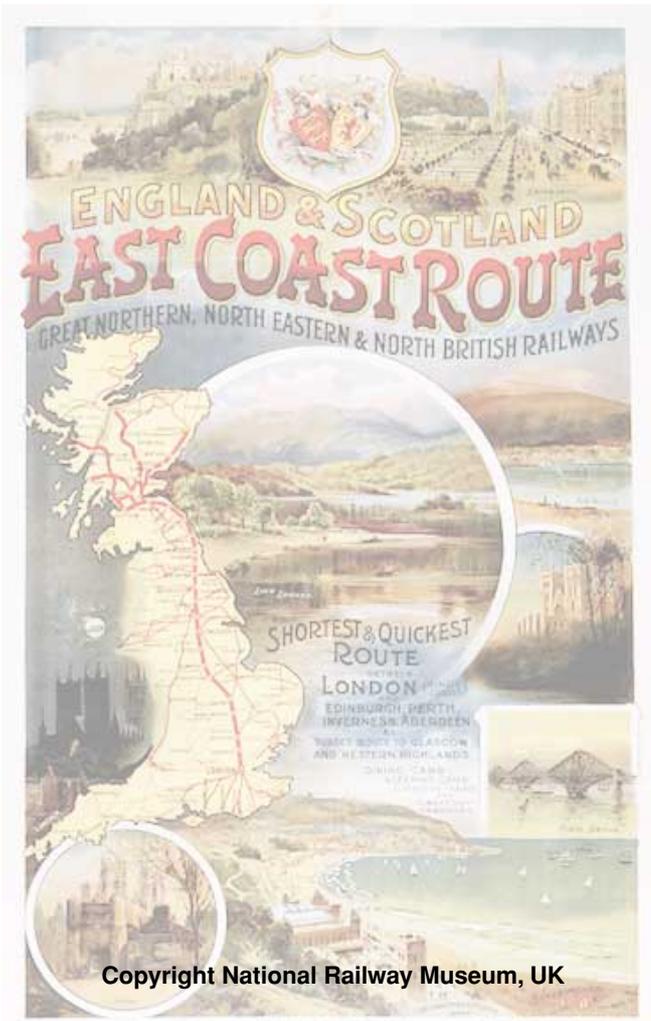


Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

LMS posters by Norman Wilkinson and Paul Henry in 1927, advertising holidays in Ireland. The LMS ran ferries and connecting boat trains to Ireland. (National Railway Museum, U.K.)

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.

British Railway Posters



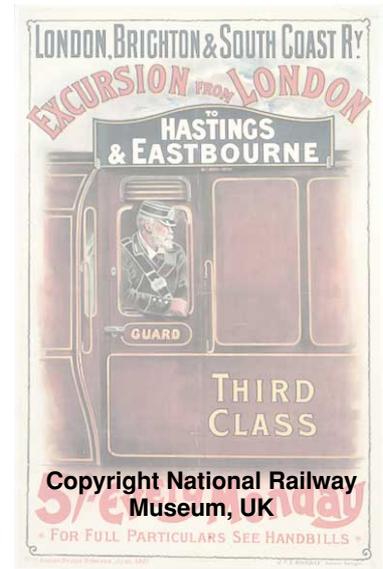
Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

England and Scotland East Coast Route c. 1900. This flamboyant poster for the eastern route from London to Scotland shows the line and illustrates in cameos some of the sights along it, such as the Forth Bridge and the attractions of the towns and cities served.



Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

Blackpool on England's north west coast owed much of its development in the nineteenth century and subsequent popularity to the railways. It was and remains a very popular resort. In this poster from the early 1920s, the artist Wilton Williams illustrates some of the fashionable women who might be among Blackpool's other delights.

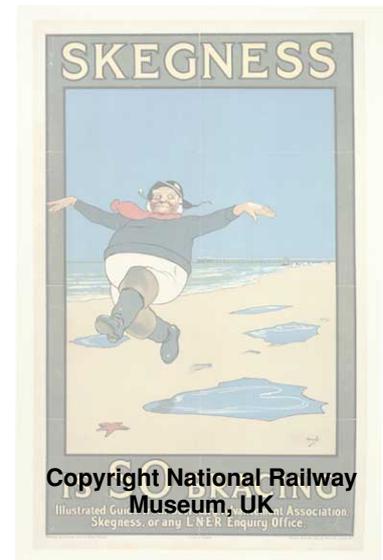


London Brighton & South Coast Railway poster promoting excursions from London to English south coast resorts, 1901. The railways played an important part in developing tourist traffic which helped to develop seaside resorts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

A South Eastern & Chatham Railway poster promoting services for the Crystal Palace Grand International Show of Poultry & Pigeons, 1921. The unknown artist has colourfully depicted some of the sorts of fancy birds and fowls featured in the show.



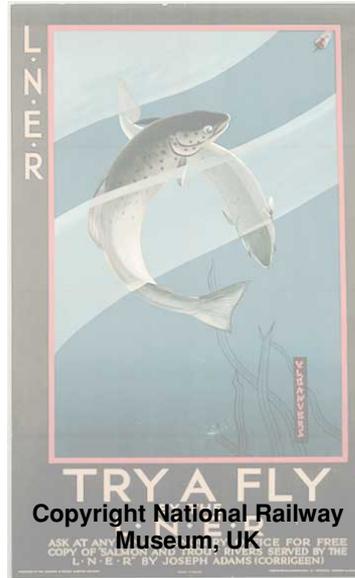
Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

The Jolly Fisherman depicted in the poster *Skegness Is So Bracing* is arguably the most famous English holiday poster image and was first produced in 1908. This is artist John Hassall's 1926 version for the London and North Eastern Railway.

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.



The Night Mail—The Enginemen, 1924. The artist William Orpen created this dramatic image of the fireman and driver of a speeding steam locomotive for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway. It is one of a series of 16 commissioned by the LMS from members of the Royal Academy.



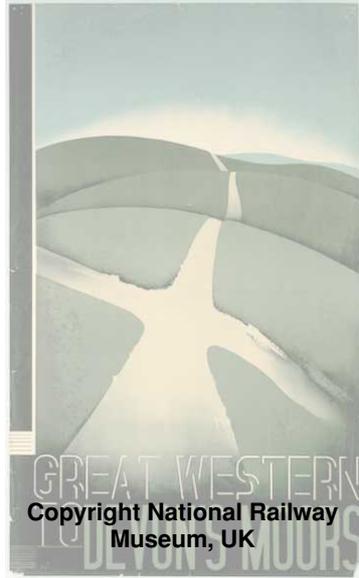
Try a Fly by V. L. Danvers. This 1925 poster is one of a series produced by the London and North Eastern Railway aimed at country sportsmen. The style is simple and clear with trout rising to an artificial fly. Its execution shows clear Japanese influences and reflects the fashion for Japanese art in Britain in the 1920s.



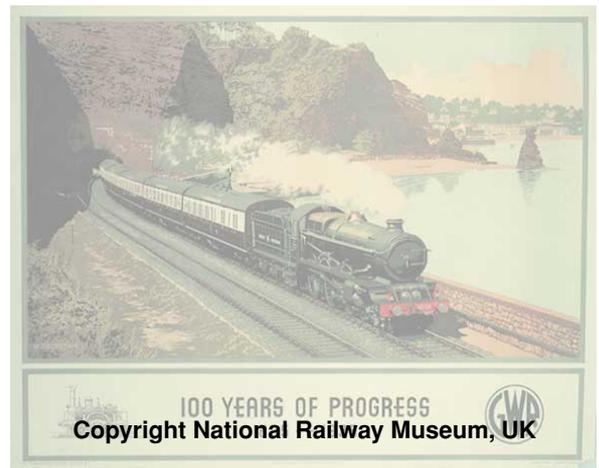
Le Fleche D'Or—Golden Arrow. The *Golden Arrow* luxury train service ran between London and Paris from 1929. Much of the advertising of continental services was carried out with other companies like Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits and Chemins de Fer du Nord using exciting continental artists like W. S. Bagdadopoulos.



East Coast Joys—Sun Bathing. This is one of six posters in a 1931 series by Tom Purvis produced for the London & North Eastern Railway which form a continuous scene when placed next to each other, but each poster is so designed that it can stand alone. This is a wonderful example of Tom Purvis's style with flat primary colours and the elimination of detail conveying the pleasures of the seaside in the 1930s.

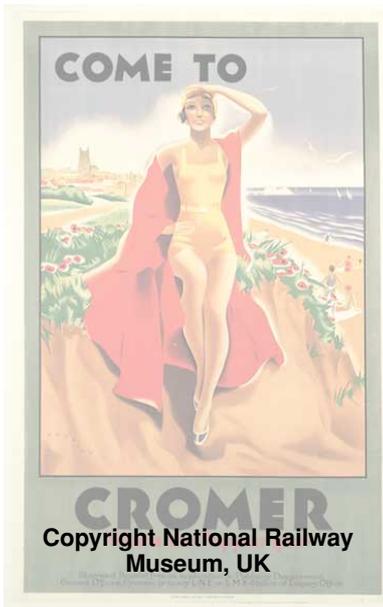


Great Western to Devon's Moors by Edward McKnight Kauffer, 1933. McKnight Kauffer's designs were influenced by new European art movements. This can be seen clearly here with strong lines which emphasize the openness of the countryside and the stunning views.



100 Years of Progress, 1835–1935 by Murray Secretan. The Great Western Railway celebrated its centenary in 1935 and published this poster as part of the celebrations.

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.



Come to Cromer by Bruce Angrave, c. 1937. In this poster an attractive fashionable young woman in her bathing costume is used to promote the delights of this east coast seaside resort with its sandy beaches.



Speed To The West, 1939. This poster by Charles Mayo, who worked in the Publicity Department of the Great Western Railway, shows a King-class locomotive, the most powerful express passenger locomotives on the railway, hauling a holiday train to the English West Country.



Have your Tickets Ready Please by Reginald Mayes c. 1945. This joint poster issued by the GWR, LMS, LNER, SR and London Transport shows thoughtless civilians delaying military staff on war service. The humorous cartoon characters convey a serious message.



Waterloo Station—(War). This was one of two posters commissioned from Helen McKie as part of the celebrations to mark the 1948 centenary of the opening of Waterloo Station. They contrast the differences in a wartime and post-war scene.

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.



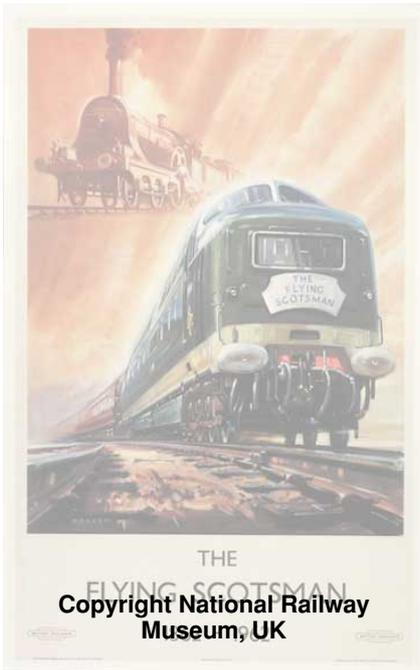
Weston Super-Mare in Somerset was a West Country resort the development of which owed much to the railways. In this early 1950s poster by Mr Merville, the delights of the lido or open air swimming pool are promoted.



Racing off Ryde by Claude Buckle, 1957. Ryde is on the Isle of Wight which is 3 miles from the south coast of Britain. It is a popular holiday location especially for leisure sailors.



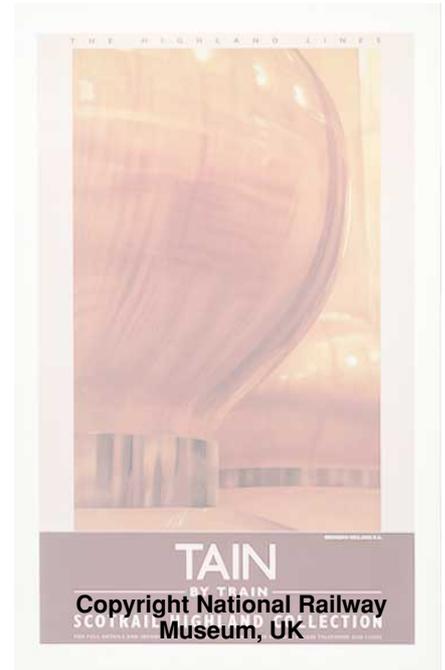
Lance Cattermole's poster from the 1960s promotes Scottish folk culture as an attraction to visitors and features sword dancing accompanied by music played on the bagpipes. Highland Games are held annually in various parts of Scotland.



This poster, by Bagley, was issued in 1962 to commemorate the centenary of the famous *Flying Scotsman* express train between London and Edinburgh. The poster is dominated by one of the powerful diesel electric Deltic-class locomotives which were introduced in 1961.



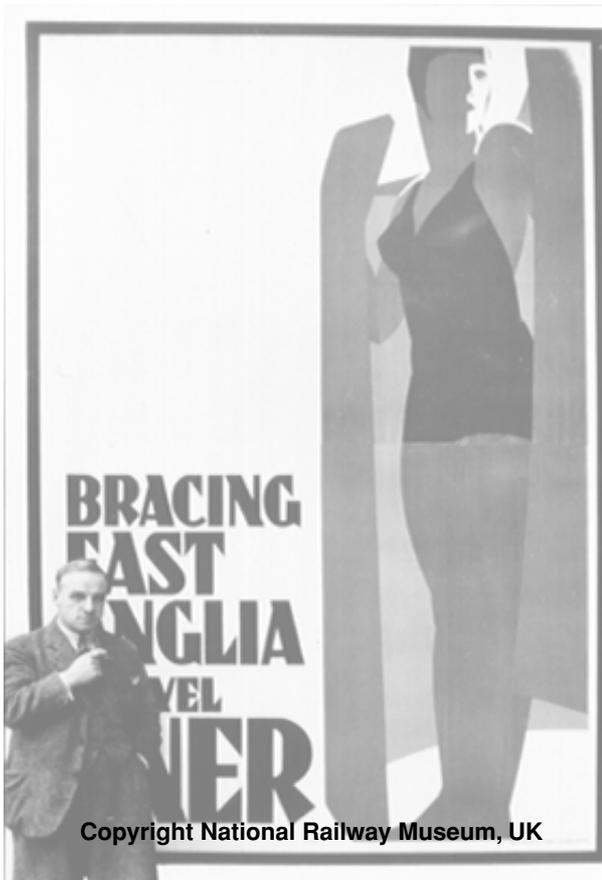
In 1976, British Rail introduced a new generation of high-speed diesel trains which reduced journey times on most of inter-city routes. They were promoted as the *Inter-City 125* trains because their maximum operating speed was 125 mph. The advertisers made considerable use of the sleek appearance of these trains which was emphasised by the design treatment of their external paintwork including the distinctive double arrow logo.



Tain—By Train by Brendan Neiland, 1996. One of a series of six posters commissioned by Scot Rail to advertise the Scottish Highland line. The image is of a whisky still for brewing Scotch whisky, one of Scotland's most famous products. (Brendan Neiland)

(All colour posters except *Tain—by Train*, courtesy of National Railway Museum/ Science & Society Picture Library, U.K.)

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.



Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

The artist Tom Purvis in front of his poster 'Bracing East Anglia—Travel LNER' circa 1932. (National Railway Museum, U.K.)



Copyright National Railway Museum, UK

An LMS staff member at Hatch End Station in 1938 pasting up a poster advertising special excursions from London to stations in Lancashire. (National Railway Museum, U.K.)

who was working for the LNER, accepted. The subjects were chosen and allocated by Wilkinson but the artists were then left to carry out the design in their own way. The first of these posters appeared early in 1924. They were intended to illustrate the life and work of the LMS as well as the scenic areas it served. Three posters depicted industries served by the LMS. This was new ground for the railway poster. In the past, the railway companies had advertised docks and other facilities that they offered to industry, but they had not shown the industries themselves. The scheme generated an enormous amount of publicity for the LMS and, as Wilkinson had predicted, opinion was largely favourable.

London and North Eastern Railway

In the LNER, relations between the constituent companies were generally amicable and the new company soon got into

its stride.

Its first poster in March 1923, featured a view by Fred Taylor of the interior of York Minster. It was much admired. Over the next few months a stream of colourful images appeared on the hoardings as the new advertising campaign got under way. The designs Taylor commissioned stretched to all corners of the system. Slogans were used by the LNER to provide a constant reminder to passengers about its major routes: *King's Cross for Scotland* and *Harwich for the Continent* were to appear frequently on posters and other publicity materials.

Some of the best advertising of these years was used to promote trains and services. Many of the companies had stressed the speed and comfort of their trains, particularly those that operated the lines between London and Scotland. This rivalry was pursued by the LMS and LNER during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1935, the LNER

introduced its first streamlined train, the *Silver Jubilee*, which ran between London and Newcastle. This was followed two years later by the *Coronation* which covered the distance between London and Edinburgh in only 6 hours.

Wartime Posters

The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 saw the hoardings cleared of most advertising. In wartime, the emphasis shifted away from leisure and holiday travel. The coastal holiday resorts effectively closed because of the threat of invasion and the railway industry took on its essential role as part of the war machine moving men and material. Station names were painted out to confuse the enemy in the event of invasion and there was a universal black out at night, masking all lighting that might

The original colour of the posters on this page has been changed for copyright reasons.

attract raiding bombers.

Space was created on the poster hoardings for notices issued by the newly-formed Railway Executive Committee, which was responsible for running the network, and for giving information on urgent matters, including emergency timetables, air-raid warnings and reduced services. The Big Four companies were united for operations under the name British Railways.

By November 1939, the British Railways network was taking the war effort seriously. They were moving extra food supplies, equipment and troops. This was carried out under strict conditions of secrecy to destinations that were guarded day and night by armed sentries.

The emphasis was on running the railway efficiently and doing a tough job in difficult conditions. Although many railwaymen were excluded from military service because railway work was seen as an essential part of the war effort, many joined up and their jobs were filled by women recruits. The public was asked to recognize the importance of the railways to the war effort; railways were *Another Mechanised Army* as depicted in one 1940 poster. People were asked to consider what was really important with questions like 'Is your journey really necessary?' and 'Food, Shells and Fuel must come first. Do you mind?'

They were also asked to play their part in keeping the railways running smoothly by travelling only when necessary, and were urged to help the hard-pressed railway workers. Some of the Railway Executive's best war posters employed a humorous cartoon style to get their message across with slogans such as 'Have your tickets ready please' and 'Heavy parcels cause delay' and 'There isn't even half an engine to spare for unnecessary journeys'. As the threat of invasion faded and the end to the war came in sight, the war posters began to come down and station name signs were restored. Optimism abounded

and the advertising boards reverted to The Big Four.

In May 1945, a joint poster by The Big Four was designed by R. Mayes to mark Victory in Europe (V-E) day with the caption *In War and Peace We Serve*. Other post-war posters reflected on the railway's wartime contribution like Helen McKie's *Waterloo pair* for the SR.

Post-war Optimism

In the optimism of the post-war period the public were no longer prepared to put up with the restrictions of wartime services. The railways began to return to normal. Poster advertising again promoted the delights of holidays at home with an emphasis on a return to pre-war standards. Posters published by the GWR during this period included views of London and Plymouth with none of the destruction that the two cities had suffered. Instead, posters recaptured much of the fun of earlier years, and passengers again found it difficult to resist the lure of coast and countryside.

Posters of Nationalized Industry

The Labour government elected in 1945 had a clear agenda to nationalize many of the principal industries of the nation. This included the railways and most other major transport operations which became part of the state-owned British Transport Commission on 1 January 1948. Public ownership brought optimism and hope to many, but brought about little initial change on the railways which continued very much as before. Unfortunately, due to the wear and tear of the war years the railways were at a low ebb. Some 6000 stations were in urgent need of repair or reconstruction and permanent-way maintenance work was in arrears to the extent of nearly 10 million sleepers. The rolling

stock position was even more serious.

The splendour and artistic merit characterizing the railway poster of the Golden Age were left behind in favour of basic explanations of the problems facing British Railways. These were often treated with the usual British humour. Also, not only were paper and printing ink in short supply after the war but the printing presses were outdated and in need of repair or renewal, so design simplicity was the best option.

The nationalized British Railways, although unified in many ways, operated like its predecessor private companies. The new British Railways (BR) regions were similar to those operated by The Big Four and many of their practices continued for the first years after nationalization. Posters had a very similar look although they now carried the British Railways name in a distinctive lozenge or totem design. Advertising was on a regional basis and only in the 1960s did a distinctive new image develop.

In the interim, the familiar re-emerged. The public was bombarded with and tempted by idyllic scenes of well-fed, happy families in beautiful Britain, enjoying picture-book weather on golden sands and British holiday fun. However, the style and designs changed to suit the changes in society that had taken place. Images of healthy families at play were used to promote resorts and rail travel. We see the upright, dependable and solid father figure, the well-proportioned, wholesome (often blonde) mother, accompanied by a couple of beaming, well-behaved and radiant children enjoying the perfect holiday. Also, the use of the female figure was shamelessly used to induce—or maybe seduce—the traveller to visit resorts from Bognor to Bridlington. There was some innovative work that can be seen in work by artists such as Abram Games.

British Rail and Corporate Identity

The railways were now having to compete seriously with the car. Posters showed the frustration experienced by motorists in traffic jams. In 1958, the first stages of railway modernization were promoted with posters showing electrification and new engineering works. In 1959, *Progress* by Terence Cuneo showed new diesel locomotives being built.

During the 1960s, British Railways underwent a radical re-shaping and re-focusing. The report *The Reshaping of British Railways* was published in 1963. It presented a plan for a new, more efficient, modern and smaller railway. This resulted in the closure of many minor routes and the emergence of the 'new' railway. Steam locomotives were replaced by modern diesel and electric locomotives and the message of the changing railway was projected through poster advertising. New, cleaner, faster trains were promoted and featured prominently in poster designs.

As part of its new image, BR undertook a radical look at design across the whole company. It decided that it needed a new corporate identity and in 1965 launched a new corporate design. This was innovative and had impact outside Britain through the widespread adoption of such elements as Jock Kinnear's British Rail Alphabet, which was designed for maximum legibility.

The whole railway was re-branded as British Rail, with the distinctive double arrow logo. Business sectors within the railway also received their own treatment within this overall corporate image. In 1966, the main-line express train services were branded Inter-City and the freight operation Railfreight. The results in poster advertising were clearly visible with a greater consistency of style that was more tightly controlled centrally.

The railway poster also had to appeal to changing consumer taste. Instead of sta-

tion posters preaching to the converted, they were having to try to tempt back passengers who were increasingly turning to their cars as the preferred form of transport. Similarly, advertising media became more diverse. Television commercials, newspaper advertising and mailshots delivered the message to the homes and offices of those who seldom used the railway. External advertising agencies were used. Media personalities were used to attract the traveller, such as rock star Gary Glitter, disc jockey Jimmy Saville, and pop group Abba. These posters were tacky and brash, reflecting the times. Railway poster art was seemingly in decline.

In the 1980s, posters were used to project the latest stage of modernization with the introduction of new high-speed trains. The stylish new Inter-City 125 trains reinforced Inter-City's visual identity, and the train was known as 'The journey shrinker'. These high-speed services were essential to win back travellers from the roads and to increase revenue for BR which was under increasing financial pressure from the government. The operating sectors of BR were now managed as separate businesses preparing the way for further radi-

cal change. Identities became confused, which is reflected in advertising images regularly incorporating several different logos or design approaches.

In 1993, the Conservative government passed legislation to take the railways out of public ownership—to privatize them. From this process, which was completed in 1997, has emerged a whole series of new train operating companies, many of which are new to the railway business. Yet again there are competing companies with a desire to increase their market share. One possible product of this change and increased competition may be a revival of railway poster art. The new companies will no doubt draw on the rich heritage of railway posters from the past, but they will hopefully combine these with an innovative new approach. Whatever happens, the NRM will continue to document the ongoing story in its continued collecting of railway posters. ■



Dieter W. Hopkin

Mr Hopkin is Head of Library and Archive Collections at the National Railway Museum in York, where he has worked since 1989. After graduating in History from the University of Leicester in 1981, he obtained a Master's degree in Museum Studies in 1988.



Beverley Cole

Ms Cole is the Curator of the Pictorial Collection at the National Railway Museum in York. Before this, she was a curator at the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television at Bradford.