

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY 5600 CLASS 0-6-2-TANK LOCOMOTIVES

With the "Grouping" of the Railway Companies in 1923, by an Act of Parliament to merge many small companies into what ultimately became known as "The Big Four", (GWR, LNER, LMS and Southern Railways"), many changes took place in locomotive design and operation.

The Great Western Railway absorbed some 760 engines of varying types from the myriad railway companies in South Wales. Most of these engines were variations of the powerful and much favoured 0-6-2 tank design, ideally suited to working the steep and twisting grades in the Welsh valleys. Some of these old 0-6-2 tanks were 'Great Westernised' by their new owners with a modern Swindon boiler, others were sold on to industrial use, and a few of these survive to day. The majority were scrapped to make way for a new standardised GWR copper capped and brass bonnet version of the classic 'taffy Tank'.

Under Charles Collett, Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Great Western Railway at the time, the Swindon drawing office designed a locomotive to meet all future operational requirements in South Wales based on the 0-6-2 wheel arrangement. A Swindon No 2 boiler set at 200lb pressure was chosen along with two 18 x 26 inch inside cylinders, using Stephenson's valve gear, 4ft 7 1/2 in driving wheels (giving a tractive effort of 25,800lbs. i.e. BR power class 5). With an overall weight of 68tons 12 cwt, the class had the highest adhesion factor of all the GWR tank engines and proved so useful it could be found all over the Western region right to the end of steam.

The 1st locomotive, No 5600 emerged from Swindon Works in 1924, followed by another 149 locomotives up to 1927. A further 50 locomotives were ordered from Armstrong Whitworth at their Scotswood works, Newcastle On Tyne, for delivery in 1928. No 6695, Works No 983, was delivered in May of that year.

A popular misconception is the 5600's only worked in South Wales. No 6695 was very much an English locomotive being based around Birmingham at the GWR's Tysley, Leamington Spa, Oxley and Wolverhampton Motive Power Depots before WW2. During the war years, No 6695, did in fact move to Wales where she spent the rest of her working life, allocated to Swansea, Neath and finally Radyr Motive Power Depots, before withdrawal in 1964. An average of 25% of the class were always attached to English sheds, proving to be an extremely versatile and powerful type of locomotive, to have available.

One major claim to fame came on 2nd November 1962, when No 6695 hauled the very last passenger train from Treherbert to Neath, upon that lines closure. During her final years of revenue earning service, our locomotive was in fact painted in British Railways Lined Passenger Green and was steam heat fitted, as she was used mainly on passenger services. Although designed to haul huge heavy loads, the limitless power and small wheels also meant terrific acceleration with light loads, making the 56xx perfect for local stopping trains.

In Dorset the 56xx class locomotives worked into Weymouth from Bristol Philips Marsh and Severn Tunnel Junction Freight Yards, as required (the route to Weymouth from Westbury via Yeovil and Dorchester) was all originally GWR) Two engines were allocated to Westbury shed during the 1950's from where engines worked West to Exeter, East to Salisbury or Reading, North to Bristol and South to Yeovil, Dorchester and Weymouth. Several members of the class were even recorded at West Bay in the late 1940s, on the Bridport Branch.

Rescued from Barry Scrapyard in 1979, No 6695 was moved to the embryonic Swanage Railway for weather proofing and storage. During the 1980,s the locomotive was stripped ready for rebuild and moved into the new facility at Herston in 1996. To-date, £95,000 has been raised by the Group to restore this locomotive.....
OUR FINAL STAGES OF RESTORATION REQUIRE A FURTHER £15,000 TO ENSURE COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT FOR ENTRY INTO SERVICE DURING 2003/4.

PART OWNERSHIP SHARES ARE AVAILABLE IN No 6695 at £250, paid fully or by monthly Bankers Order. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS TO SUIT PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS CAN BE ARRANGED, BY CONTACTING THE ADDRESS BELOW.

ALL DONATIONS , however small , are also gratefully received towards the cost of rebuilding and the future maintenance of this locomotive, THANK YOU. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROJECT, PLEASE CONTACT; 6695 LOCOMOTIVE GROUP, C/O 54 REMPSTONE ROAD, MERLEY, WIMBORNE, DORSET, BH21 IRP.

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