

45118

45118 was built at Crewe Works as part of the final batch of Class 45s, being released to traffic on 5th May 1962, numbered D67, with split centre headcode boxes and sporting lined green livery with small yellow panels. In September 1965, it was selected to receive the name 'The Royal Artilleryman' and the nameplates were fitted without ceremony in September 1965. Conversion to a Class 45/1 and renumbering to 45118 came in December 1973 and on release from a light overhaul at Derby Works in June 1977, the loco sported the 'domino' headcode panels and by this time had lost one crest from the



45118 at St Pancras in 1980, showing white nameplate

No.2 end driver's side. In late 1979, the loco became unique when the nameplates were painted white with black lettering, the only Peak to receive this treatment. In October 1980, however, it entered Derby Works for a Heavy General Overhaul, when the headcode boxes were removed in favour of sealed beam headlights and the nameplates returned to the conventional red background with silver letters.

The nameplate from the No.2 end Secondman side appears to have gone missing between February and November 1983, leaving just one plate without crest on the other side. It was in this condition when in 1985, the loco was selected to be the final Class 45 to receive classified attention, entering Derby Works in late December. It was released from light overhaul on 23rd April 1986, freshly repainted and including the now obligatory orange cant rail stripe. The remaining nameplate was also repainted and this was carried by the loco until August 1986, when it was removed for 'safekeeping' by Toton Depot, along with the remaining nameplates from all of its classmates. Also in August 1986, the loco was fitted with high intensity headlights.



45118 in 1986, with remaining nameplate and orange cant rail stripe

In mid-January 1987, 45118 (transferred from Toton to Tinsley Depot on 23rd November 1986) received bogie damage in a minor collision whilst shunting in the ballast sidings at Loughborough. Probably because the loco was so recently out of works, it was decided to send it to Derby Works with recently withdrawn sister loco 45116, for a bogie swap. It was released from Derby by February 16th 1987 and continued to work Midland Mainline, Trans-Pennine and Cross Country passenger, parcels and mail traffic up until May of that year. On 7th May 1987, 45118 departed Newcastle with the 1V97 mail train to Bristol, but the loco suffered a fire near Rotherham and was removed from the train to be sent to Tinsley for assessment. There, it was found that the No.2 traction motor junction box connections had burnt back through trunking to the control cubicle. As Tinsley had been instructed to withdraw a number of 45/1s from service as surplus, 45118 was condemned on the following day, Friday 8th May.

Together with many of its classmates, 45118 was then sent to March Depot in Cambridgeshire for storage. It was hauled there, along with 45132 and 45133, by 20150, arriving at March at 16:20 on 21st May 1987. Three years of open storage then followed. In 1989, an advertisement was placed in 'Steam Railway News' asking anybody interested in securing a Class 45/1 locomotive for use at the Northampton Steam Railway to come forward. One reply came from Mr Dave Young and in April 1990,

45118 was offered for sale by competitive tender and was successfully bought for preservation on 11th May 1990.

Movement by road from March to Northampton was planned for 13th-15th August 1990, with 'Moveright International' of Sutton Coldfield appointed as contractor. However, the move was cancelled at the last minute due to a weak bridge near Peterborough. An alternative route was identified via the A141 from March to Chatteris, Huntingdon (A604), Thrapston and Rushden Bypasses, then the A45 to Northampton. On 15th September 1990, 45118 was winched on to a 96 wheel low loader at March Depot and at 08:20 the following day the loco departed with a Police escort. Following an uneventful journey the loco touched down onto Northampton Steam Railway metals later the same day.

Restoration work began later that year, with the fire damaged traction motor isolated, a burnt out radiator fan motor replaced and the main generator dried out using a space heater placed underneath, via a temporary hole cut in the floor. The triple pump was freed up and various cooling system leaks repaired. On October 10th 1993, the engine was turned over for about 40 seconds before bursting into life for the first time in over six years. The loco moved under its own power the following week and then the long process of bodywork repairs and a repaint in BR blue began.



Naming ceremony at Pitsford & Brampton station on 05/10/97

As no original drawings for the nameplates could be found, the owner visited the Royal Artillery Museum to get some drawings made from an original on display there. Replica plates were then cast and fitted to the loco and to put right the fact that the loco had not received a proper naming ceremony, one was arranged for October 5th 1997. Major Peter Bates of the 7th Parachute Regiment unveiled the name at Pitsford & Brampton station, accompanied by members of the regiment and complete with military field guns on

the platform! Following battery replacement and heat exchanger repairs, the loco performed reliably for the next few years, until 2001 when a routine oil sample analysis identified high levels of engine bearing wear. The loco was therefore withdrawn from traffic and in April 2003, the engine was stripped down for the big end bearings to be replaced and cylinder heads refurbished. The loco re-entered service on 28th June 2003 and saw regular use on the short preserved line, by now known as the Northampton & Lamport Railway (NLR).

Unfortunately, in September 2008, the NLR was visited by metal thieves, who broke into 45118 and did considerable damage to the ETH cubicle and generator connections, cutting copper cables and removing components. Thankfully, a lot of the damage was covered by an insurance policy and the loco was moved by road to RVEL (now Loram) at Derby on 3rd August 2009 for repairs to start. Progress has been very slow however, with work only taking place in between the companies' other contracts. In the intervening years the owner decided that the loco would not return to the NLR and it was offered for sale.



45118 awaiting repairs at RVEL Derby in 2012



In 2018 it was announced that the loco had been sold to Locomotive Services Ltd, based in Crewe and it was to be overhauled for a return to the main line! On 6th March 2018, 45118 was top and tailed by 20107 and 20132 and moved from Derby to Barrow Hill for the overhaul to start. At Barrow Hill, engine and generator repairs were completed by 30th

October 2019, when the loco was started for the first time in over 10 years. The loco moved under its own power on in January 2020 and was run up on a load bank on 22nd May 2020, after which the engine was lifted out and the body lifted off its bogies. Bodywork repairs and a complete rebuild of the bogies then followed.



45118 undergoing overhaul at Barrow Hill on 19/02/21



Bogies under overhaul at Barrow Hill on 26/01/21

The photo on the right shows the power unit being lowered back into the loco on 2nd February 2023, with the loco at that time expected to be ready for service later in 2023, painted in BR blue livery with 'domino' headcodes. However problems with the generator resulted in it having to be removed again for rectification, which meant the loco was not ready for commissioning and painting until the Spring of 2024.



45118 Returns to the Main Line

On 29th May 2024, 45118 'The Royal Artilleryman' became the first Peak to run under its own power on the main line network for 17 years (since 45112 was retired from use). No expense had been spared on the rebuild, which included a complete bogie, engine and generator overhaul, as well as full bodywork refurbishment. The completed locomotive was rolled out of the workshop in April, pristine in BR blue livery, with split centre head code boxes and nameplates reinstated. It then underwent a period of testing at Barrow Hill, including many hours on the load bank.

45118 departed Barrow Hill on a test run, with Class 40 No. D213 and Class 37 No.37409 at 10:09 on 29th May, running as 0Z40 to Worksop (arriving at 11:43). It then worked the same locos back to Barrow Hill, running as 0Z41 12:13 departure, arriving Barrow Hill at 13:05. It then led the other locos as 0Z44 14:28 from Barrow Hill to Crewe LSL, via Sheffield, Derby, Lichfield Trent Valley and Stafford, arriving at its home base at 18:45.



45118's No.1 end cab drivers desk, showing the sympathetic modifications to incorporate the TPWS and GSMR equipment to the right of the power handle.

The next workings were on 11th June 2024 when 45118 did two trips from Crewe to Chester and

return partnered with Class 47 No.47593 (also on test). The pair ran as 0D41 09:00 from Crewe, returning as 0K42 11:10 from Chester, then 0D43 12:53 from Crewe, returning as 0K44 15:11 from Chester (actually departing 116 early at 13:15)! LSL reported that apart from some tweaks required to the set up of the various safety systems, the loco performed very well and was ready for a loaded test run with coaching stock.

This run was arranged for Thursday 4th July, with 45118 working 5P45 09:40 Crewe – Coton Hill, consisting of 11 Mk1/2 coaches and Class 57 No.57311 on the rear. After a booked layover at Coton Hill, the train then proceeded as 5P55 13:32 from Coton Hill, back to Crewe via Wellington, Bushbury and Stafford. The drivers and on-board fitter were extremely impressed with the run and the loco easily reached 92mph between Bushbury and Stafford. It was also likely that a similar speed would also have been achieved on the West Coast Main Line between Stafford and Crewe, had there not been adverse signals due to following a light loco. The train arrived at Crewe at 15:55 and 45118 declared fit to work its first railtour.

That tour was on Saturday 27th July – Inter-City's 'The Diamond Jubilee Express' from Bristol Temple Meads to York. The day before, 45118 took the empty coaching stock as 5Z46 08:52 from Crewe to Bristol via Hereford. En-route, the voltage regulator tripped causing the loco to shut down between Abergavenny and Little Mill. 47810 was promptly dispatched from Crewe to assist but by the time it had reached the stricken train, 45118 had been repaired and the train moved forward to Panteg Loop.

A faulty wiring crimp had come loose and this had been repaired by the on-board fitter. The train arrived at Bristol East at 16:09 (195 late) to stable overnight.



45118 waits to depart Bristol Temple Meads with 'The Diamond Jubilee Express' on 27th July 2024.

The stock dropped into Bristol Temple Meads the next morning and at 07:03, 45118 made a spirited departure with the rake of two Mk2, four Mk3 and one Mk1 buffet vehicles, plus 47810 on the rear (362 tonnes total), with 1Z45 to York. 45118 performed brilliantly all day, including an attack on the Lickey Incline from a booked station stop at Bromsgrove (achieving 22mph at the top, unassisted). Arrival at York was at 13:08, greeted by a large number of photographers to capture the image of a Class 45 at the platform where they were once an everyday sight on Trans-Pennine services.



45118 on arrival at York with 'The Diamond Jubilee Express' from Bristol on 27th July 2024.

The stock stabled in York North Yard and then formed the 1Z46 16:48 return to Bristol, with 45118 impressing again, running at 95mph for a stretch between Ashchurch and Cheltenham. After stabling overnight at Bristol East, the loco and stock returned to Crewe the next day as a 5Z36 13:37 departure.



45118 at Preston whilst working 'The North West Wanderer' tour on 10th August 2024.

45118 then featured prominently with Inter-City 'The North West Wanderer' tour on 10th August, which set off from Crewe at 08:02 with Class 50 No.50050 leading the consist of one Mk1, one Mk2 and nine Mk3 vehicles with 45118 on the rear to Carlisle. 45118 then hauled the next leg of the tour as 1Z60 11:17 Carlisle to Preston via the S&C. With 519 tonnes in tow, 45118 achieved 42mph at Ais Gill Summit, with a beaming driver on arrival at Preston claiming that 45118 is the 'best loco LSL have got!' The next legs of the tour were a Preston – Lancaster – Preston hauled by Class 40 D213 and then a Preston – Rochdale – Bolton – Preston hauled by Class 37s 37521/409, both with 45118 on the back providing ETH and some gentle assistance on the gradients where required. Back at Preston for the fourth time, Class 20s 20132/118 were coupled to the front of 45118 for the final run back to Crewe, arriving at 23:00.

Further tours worked by 45118 in 2024 were a Liverpool – Newcastle and return tour on 8th November out via Diggle and back via the Calder Valley, followed by a Wolverhampton to Blaenau Ffestiniog and Llandudno (with Class 40 D213) on 14th December. It is certainly great to see a 45/1 on the main line again and I am sure we can look forward to many more tours in the future.

Steve Dexter