

# 45118

45118 was built at Crewe Works as part of the final batch of Class 45s, being released to traffic on 5<sup>th</sup> 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 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.



45118 at St Pancras in 1980, showing white nameplate

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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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 Probably because the loco was so recently out of works, it was decided to send it to Derby Works with recently withdrawn sister loco 45116, for a bogie swap.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 16<sup>th</sup> 1987 and continued to work Midland Mainline, Trans-Pennine and Cross Country passenger, parcels and mail traffic up until May of that year. On 7<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> May 1990.

Movement by road from March to Northampton was planned for 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 1997. Major Peter Bates of the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009 for repairs to start. Progress has been very



45118 awaiting repairs at RVEL Derby in 2012

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.

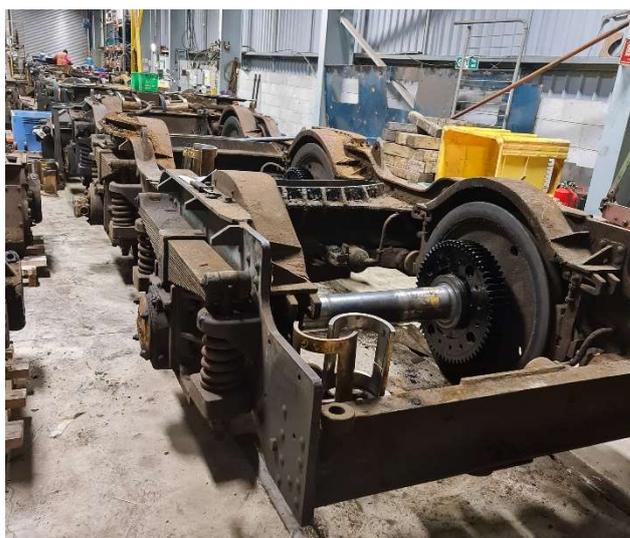


In 2018 it was announced that the loco had been sold to Locomotive Services Ltd, based in Crewe and it was to be overhauled for a return to the main line! On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018, 45118 was top and tailed by 20107 and 20132 and moved from Derby to Barrow Hill for the overhaul to start. At Barrow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

by 30<sup>th</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023, with the loco expected to be ready for service later in 2023, painted in BR blue livery with 'domino' headcodes.

**Steve Dexter**

