

45133 in Preservation – 1990 to 2017

Purchase of 45133 was concluded in January 1990 after two and half years of hard work prising the loco out of BR's hands. Excuses for not selling included asbestos content, the power unit being required for re-use, possible reinstatement and then possible sale in a package deal to the new owners of the Settle & Carlisle line!!

However, once ours, arrangements commenced to move the loco from March Depot by rail to her new home at Peak Rail, Matlock (which was the original choice of location for keeping the loco). In the meantime, volunteers completed a repaint at March to make our pride and joy more presentable to the enthusiast fraternity. Then a shortage of space at Matlock meant a change of plan and 133 was offered a 'temporary' home at Butterley, rent free until the autumn if the loco could take part in the May 19th/20th Diesel Gala. However, problems in organising the move (who said the railway ran more smoothly in BR days?!) meant it was not until 22nd May 1990 that 45133 was moved to Doncaster in the consist of 6X16 Whitemoor – Tees Yard. The following day she was moved again as part of 6X88 Doncaster – Spondon as far as Toton. She was then tripped to the Midland Railway Centre (MRC) later that morning to begin a new life in preservation.

Maintenance carried out at March ensured that 133 was soon hauling trains and the loco made its debut on 25th May at the head of an evening dining special, performing very well for a loco withdrawn just over three years previously!

Ongoing repairs and fundraising continued whilst the loco joined the Open Day circuit (remember those?) to boost much needed publicity, attending Coalville on 3rd June, Crewe Works on 21st July and Kings Lynn on 29th September. From Kings Lynn, 133 moved to the Nene Valley Railway for their Diesel Gala on 6th/7th October, which provided a first in Class 45 history – haulage of Danish coaches!

By the time the coolant was drained for winter maintenance on 4th November, 45133 had completed 151 miles at Butterley and 48 miles on the Nene Valley Railway, with very few problems – a pretty good performance.

At the 1991 AGM on 12th May, it was decided to accept the offer of a permanent home at Butterley due to the superior facilities and 133 settled into regular running days at the MRC, as well as continuing visits to Open Days at Coalville, Worksop and Laira. A special occasion in 1991 was the loco's 30th Birthday, which was celebrated with a special dining train on 20th July, complete with an appropriate headboard.

The busy maintenance period over the winter of 1991/2 included the daunting task of removing and testing every single air receiver for insurance purposes, but this enabled 133 to complete what was to be an even busier 1992 season. Longsight 150 Open Day was attended on 25th April, followed by a visit to the Severn Valley Railway on 8th-11th May, giving plenty of opportunity for thrash! Bescot and Leicester Open Days followed, before a highly successful running weekend on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway (NYMR) at the end of September – and a stop over at Thornaby Open Day on the way home! Over 300 miles on three different railways and four Open Day appearances – phew!

This was all good stuff, but the frequent towing to Open Days was increasing wear and tear on the bogies, so that winter it was decided to curtail this practice in the future, unless it formed part of the journey to or from another preserved line.

Low water pressure was found to be caused by a badly defective heat exchanger, so in February 1993 a replacement was obtained from 47005 at Booth's scrapyards and fitted by the end of March. This involved the removal of the loco roof, using the breakdown crane at Swanwick Jn. Other work over the winter included the addition of an orange cantrail stripe and modifications to the exhaust for improved sound!

45133 had obviously impressed the right people at the NYMR, as in April 1993 it returned for a whole summer season on the railway to cover for steam loco fire risk. It was typical that the summer that year was very wet! All the same, some very enjoyable runs ensured that our loco even appeared on a BBC Look North programme about signalling irregularities. The last time that 45133 had appeared on TV was back in 1989 when the Society was featured on Anglia News at March Depot.

On return to Swanwick, the orange cantrail stripe was painted out and replaced by white rain strips, Toton rabbit stickers and red buffer beam embellishments for the Autumn Diesel Gala.

By now, the No.1 end traction motor blower was beginning to sound like a cement mixer full of bricks, so an overhaul was undertaken during the winter. The opportunity was also taken to re-plate the nose end floor at the same time.

1994 was a fairly quiet running season at the MRC, but other things were keeping the Society busy. The last unpreserved Peaks were being scrapped and it was felt that the opportunity to obtain some more major spares should be taken. A Spares Fund Appeal was set up and tremendous support enabled the purchase of a complete engine (ex-45058) together with other smaller items, at a cost of £4500. 45133's operational future was gradually being secured.

On 17th/18th September the MRC held a 'Lost Peaks Weekend', with 45133 masquerading as 45147, bringing back many past memories and generating some publicity in the railway press. By now our loco had accumulated over 1500 miles in preservation – at the time more mileage than any other Peak.

In 1995, 45133 was dogged with failing batteries, making it increasingly difficult to start the engine and thereby threatening the loco's exemplary reliability record. It was decided at the end of the MRC running season to purchase a brand new set of batteries at a cost of over £4000. These were delivered and fitted by 7th October, bringing a dramatic improvement.

1996 brought the shock announcement that 45133 was to visit the Great Central Railway and be painted GREEN to conform to their livery policy! The move was to take place the week beginning 11th March, but the loco could not be loaded onto the road transporter due to the poor condition of the track. Perhaps 45133 thought that another season at Butterley was preferred to being painted green or ending up in the dirt! During the year the loco received Toton style 'go faster' white stripes and on 12th October returned to old haunts by attending Bedford Open Day, gaining the dubious Railtrack TOPS number of 89440 in the process.

At the end of the year a spare bogie ex-45127 became available and was purchased at a cost of £3000. As funds were low, another appeal was made to the membership, again generating magnificent support. When the chips are down....!

1997 saw the 10th anniversary of 45133's withdrawal from BR service and from a survey in 'Peak Power' the membership voted for a Greek mythological name to be applied to mark this event. On 10th May, Tinsley fitter Phil Hodgkiss unveiled the name 'Polyphemus', which 45133 may have carried in BR service, had she survived in traffic for a bit longer.

The stripes and unofficial name were sort lived however, as in winter 1997 major bodywork repairs took place, including complete replacement of the cab sides, followed by a total repaint at the hands of ex-Derby Works painter Ernie Bradley.

On 31st May 1998, 45133 was rolled out of Swanwick shed immaculate in ex-works BR blue, complete with a shiny coat of varnish to preserve her good looks!

In July of that year 45133 attended the East Lancs Railway 'mega-mix' event, sharing four days of running with 44004, 45060 and D172. This was the first time in preservation that all Peak variants could be sampled for haulage on the same day. No.1 compressor was rebuilt during the winter of 1998 prior to another busy season at the MRC in 1999.

In the summer of 2000, 45133 received two invites - to attend the North York Moors Railway diesel gala and to attend the EWS Open Day at Old Oak Common. The NYMR option was accepted, but then the price EWS quoted for moving the loco prevented this happening. Unfortunately, by the time this was known, it was also too late to arrange the move to Old Oak! This seemed to be a bad omen, as the engine governor started to give problems at about the same time and after numerous unsuccessful efforts to rectify the fault, it was decided to send the errant component to Crewe Works (Bombardier) for overhaul.

Although the loco was not operational, 45133's 40th Birthday was marked by a commemorative headboard with the wording '40/40 – Top Marks'. By late 2001, the overhauled governor had been refitted, but was still giving problems. In addition, the heat exchanger had sprung a leak, the on board battery charger had burnt out and various oil and air leaks had developed.

All in all, 2001 was written off as a bad year! Over the winter, most of the defects were fixed and Crewe was offering various solutions to the governor problem! The loco was started up in March 2002, but battery problems resulted in a refurbished set being fitted. Then the engine began to 'hunt', when it was found that over 200 gallons of fuel had been stolen, emptying the tank!

45133 finally returned to traffic on 14th August 2002, after the governor had paid another visit to Crewe for rectification. The loco blew away the cobwebs by working five round trips at the MRC over the Bank Holiday weekend.

Winter 2002, and it was back to the workshop to complete the daunting task of removing all 22 air receivers for their 10 year insurance certification. This work had to be accelerated when the NYMR gave a renewed invite to attend the April 2003 diesel gala, followed by a stay over the summer to cover for steam locos stopped by fire risk.

One air receiver failed the inspection but luckily the Pioneer Diesel Group came to the rescue by lending one of their spares. 8 The NYMR gala of 11th-13th April passed without incident and then 133 enjoyed a fantastic summer on the Moors working regular trains to cover for failures. The season was topped off by a very enjoyable member's special on 30th August when 133 did 3 round trips hauling just an observation car, complete with on board buffet! Total mileage by the end of 2003 was 1554 miles – the highest yearly total yet in preservation. Hire charges had also replenished the bank account to the tune of £8000. To cap it all, the NYMR were so taken with our loco that they extended the invite to stay until the end of 2004 – 45133's fortunes were looking up!

Only minor maintenance was needed over the winter, with mainly the vacuum system and horns receiving attention, along with new oil filters. The diesel gala on 23rd-25th April 2004 heralded an equally successful season on the Moors with another 1000 miles in the bag and a repeat of the member's special on 31st July.

Another extension to the hire period to the end of 2005 saw further maintenance carried out at Goathland over the winter. The equivalent of a 'C' exam was completed - brake blocks, windscreen wipers, fuel and air filters were all changed. The main problem was the poor condition of the air/vacuum relay valve which had to be sent away to Faiveley Transport (formerly Metcalfe & Davies) for repair. Various roof leaks were also looked at and temporarily repaired. It was discovered that the well section where the exhaust silencer sits had rotted through and would need further attention soon. Booth's scrap merchants in Rotherham were busy cutting up redundant Freightliner Class 47s at this time and so the opportunity was taken to purchase a car boot full of brake valves and a spare heat exchanger (from 47339)!

45133's third successive NYMR diesel gala on 13th-15th May 2005 saw our loco clock up 234 passenger miles and 54 light engine miles in just 3 days! Towards the end of the running season (another 1200 miles later), 133 was embellished with Tinsley style white window surrounds and red buffer beams.

In October 2005, 45133 finally made her way back home to the MRC for some much needed TLC! The journey back included an overnight stay at the National Railway Museum in York and a stop over opposite Derby Station, near her birthplace of Derby Works, arriving at Swanwick on 25th. Planned repairs included a thorough bodywork restoration and a full repaint, but it was not until July 2006 that shed space was available to allow removal of the nose crowns, engine room roof and radiator grilles. Large amounts of re-plating and welding later and the loco was ready for priming and undercoating during the summer of 2007. October of that year saw the long awaited completion of the new diesel shed, so it was decided to defer the top coat of paint until the loco could use this shed in warmer weather the following year. In the meantime the heat exchanger was changed for the one from Booth's and the main generator and traction motors were cleaned up and treated to new brushes. Some further re-plating was completed on the floor around the main generator, where it was found to have rotted through.

45133 emerged in immaculate ex-works condition from the paint shop in August 2008, but many of the loco's batteries were life expired. It was therefore decided at the AGM to bite the bullet and invest in a brand new set - a major expenditure – but well worth it to ensure reliable starting of the engine. These were delivered and fitted over the winter 2008/9 period.

45133 participated in a successful diesel gala at the MRC at the end of April 2009 and enjoyed a few more running days during the summer, before starring in D4's 50th Birthday running weekend on 26th/27th September, alongside D4, D182 and 45041. The following weekend, courtesy of an Ultrasonic Axle Test paid for by the Nene Valley Railway, 133 performed at their diesel gala of 2nd-4th October, returning for the first time since 1990!

Back at the MRC for routine maintenance and a leaking radiator was changed as well as some niggling brake faults attended to, before the loco was drained for the winter. It was also noticed that water was entering the cabs via the roof ventilators and affecting the roof linings, so the ventilators were blanked off to prevent further damage.

2010 proved to be a busy year, starting off with a visit to the Mid Norfolk Railway for their gala on 19th-21st March. This gave 133 the opportunity to show her worth hauling air braked blue/grey coaches and providing ETH. She coped admirably! Hot on the heels of this came an invite to the Swanage gala on 7th-9th May, after 33035, then 33201 dropped out of contention. The loco roster included 133 hauling shuttle services formed of a Southern VEP unit – surely a first for a 45/1?

Summer 2010 was busy with several running days at the MRC, culminating in the autumn diesel gala on the first weekend of October. Maintenance that winter was carried out whilst the loco was stored in the diesel shed, which meant 133 escaped the freezing temperatures and snow that otherwise could have caused significant damage. Attention was paid to the cab door areas (so the doors open and shut more freely!) and the radiator drip trays were cleaned up and repainted.

2011 saw 45133 celebrate her 50th Birthday and a special running weekend was arranged for 14th/15th May, when she again carried a commemorative headboard. This time the loco managed to attract the attention of the local press, who printed a photo and a short article! The following weekend, 133 featured in the MRC diesel gala, but the rest of the season was fairly quiet. Following the October diesel gala, the loco was 'winterised' and the radiator fan motor was removed for overhaul at Bowers. This motor had not seen attention since BR days and was showing signs of wear that could result in a failure. The linoleum flooring was also replaced in No.2 cab and the cab seats refurbished.

All this work was completed in time to fulfil an invitation to the Severn Valley Railway for their gala on 4th-6th October 2012. Well, the loco ran without fault on all three days of the gala. It was then planned that the loco would be 'winterised' in early November, but out of the blue, contact was made by British American Railway Services (BARS) with a view to hiring 45133 for their Polar Express operations at the Weardale Railway! After careful consideration of how the loco would be looked after and crewed, it was decided to accept the invitation and following a 'C' exam at Swanwick, the loco was moved to the Weardale Railway on 12th/13th November.

Our loco was probably worked the hardest ever in preservation that winter, running for a total of 32 days over a 7 week period and working 75 round trips of the Polar Express. Despite the arduous work, hauling 11 Mk2 coaches and a Class 31 on gradients up to 1 in 80 in slippery rail conditions, 45133 returned 100% availability. However, some minor issues with the air brake system and small oil leaks lead to the decision to decline BARS invitation to stay at the Weardale for the summer season and for the loco to return to Swanwick in January 2013 for maintenance.

During the Spring, various brake components were removed and sent for overhaul, oils leaks were attended to and the air receivers tested and recertified. 45133 then headed for more new territory, with a visit to the North Norfolk Railway (NNR) for their diesel gala on 14th-16th June. A low power issue during the gala was identified as caused by a blocked pipe between the air inlet manifold and the engine governor, which was kindly rectified by the NNR fitter. A leaking fuel pump was also isolated and changed on arrival back at Swanwick. Otherwise, the gala was a great success.

45133 then operated at the Midland Railway-Butterley (MRB) diesel gala on 21st/22nd September, before attending the Nene Valley Railway gala on the first weekend of October. A return visit to the Weardale Railway for the Polar Express then beckoned and after completion of another 'C' exam the loco was moved there at the end of October 2013. Again, the loco operated 85 trips over 32 days, with the only significant problem being a pin hole leak in a heat exchanger cover, which was changed by one of the railway's fitters.

The loco returned 100% availability again. Experiencing the loco working flat out in the dark hauling a heavy train on significant gradients was something to behold.

Departure from the Weardale Railway in Spring 2014 was delayed by various issues, but this turned out to be to our advantage. The tyre profiles on the loco had previously been identified as close to the limit of flange wear in some cases. So as part of the agreement with BARS, when the loco finally departed Wolsingham on 15th May, it was to Derby Etches Park for tyre turning! It was certainly a landmark event to see our loco back in its birth city for attention at a main line maintenance facility. 15mm was turned from the thinnest tyres and around half that amount from the remainder. Even accounting for two more visits to the lathe in future, there is enough life left in the tyres to last us to around 2080!

An extra bonus was that we had accepted an invitation for 45133 to go to the Mid Norfolk Railway (MNR) for the 2014 summer season. So, with some Mk2 coaches due to be returned by BARS from Derby to the Mid Norfolk Railway, 45133 'hitched a lift' to Dereham on 24th May, thus saving the Society the movement costs for tyre turning and to the MNR!

Another invitation to return to the Weardale Railway for the 2014 Polar Express operation was declined due to various concerns over the viability and operating practices of BARS and the desire not to compromise the loco's reliability through another season of intensive use. Instead, an offer was accepted from the MNR for the loco to stay at the railway until the end of 2015.

During the summer of 2014, 45133 saw regular use on the MNR, culminating in their diesel gala on 29th/30th August. Various issues with air brake valves and a sticking field divert system were resolved before the first of several '100 mile' running days (5 round trips of the line) was enjoyed by over 30 peak fans on September 20th. The loco then operated at all 8 Santa Special operating days on December, followed by a diesel gala on 27th/28th of that month. Unfortunately, on the first day of the gala a burnt out resistor stopped the loco taking power. The fault was quickly resolved but assistance had already been arranged and 45133 became the first preserved loco to be rescued by a Class 68!

Following routine winter maintenance, 45133 operated another '100 mile' running day on 15th March 2015, following which it was noted that water was leaking from the triple pump. On stripping down the pump it was found that a chunk of metal was missing from the impellor, various seals had failed and there was play in the bearing. A tremendous effort to complete repairs saw the loco ready for use at a 1980's weekend on 23rd/24th May complete with our newly made 'Class 45/1 Preservation Society' headboard and freshly applied Toton rabbit stickers!

During 2015 we learnt of the passing of two of our members, Mr Brian Lockey, who was one of the founding members of the Society in 1986 and Mr Gerald Lambert, who had been an avid supporter. Both had left very generous bequests to the Society in their will, which was to change the course of how the Society is run and also safeguard the future of 45133 long into the future.

During the summer of 2015 the equivalent of a 'D' exam was completed on the loco, addressing issues with leaking fuel pumps and rocker covers and ongoing brake system niggles.

On October 10th 2015 we had another '100 mile' running day and combined this with a celebration of 25 years in preservation (postponed from May). The loco sported appropriate headboards and we enjoyed a fish and chip supper and special cake on the train. An issue with the ETH caused the loco to shut down and miss one trip, but this was soon rectified and an excellent day was had by all!

During November, defective resistors were changed to cure the ETH fault and an engine oil change prepared the loco for another busy season on Santa Specials.

At the AGM in January 2016 two important matters were discussed. Firstly, an application to move the Society to a charitable status, to maximise the benefit from our recent bequests and provide ongoing tax benefits. Secondly, we considered an invitation from the MNR for 45133 to be based there permanently. A vote on both found favour for the first, but declined the second. Thoughts also turned to using the bequests to invest in a thorough overhaul of 45133.

For a running day on August 20th 2016, 45133 carried temporary nameplates 'Gerald Lambert' and 'Brian Lockey' in honour of the gentlemen who had remembered 45133 in their wills.

Following further running days in September and November and another Santa season, history was made on Saturday 31st December 2016 when 45133 became the first of any of the "Peak" class locomotives to run north out of Dereham, reaching their operating limit of Hoe level crossing as part of the post Christmas Gala. This would be the last duty at the MNR, as it was decided that after a considerably longer stay and having clocked up approximately 1000 miles, it was time to return home for a comprehensive overhaul.

However, due to a lack of shed space at the Midland Railway-Butterley until the autumn of 2017, an invitation to move to the North Norfolk Railway (NNR) was accepted, and so on Thursday 6th April 2017, 45133 was moved by rail to Norfolk's other heritage line by the coast for a five month hire. Due to non-availability of other traction, our loco was used intensively and operated reliably throughout the summer season.

September 23rd 2017 was the final running day at the NNR and 45133 returned to Swanwick on 7th November. The loco was shunted into 'C' bay at Swanwick and work on the current overhaul commenced on 3rd December. Details of the overhaul itself warrants an article of its own and will be produced at a later date.

I think it is safe to say that the last 30 years have demonstrated both the highs and lows of loco preservation. The lows have been a couple of long periods out of service waiting for parts. The highs have been memorable running days and visits to many different preserved railways. This is probably typical of the challenges faced in maintaining a 60 year old machine with limited spares and resources, but the sight and sound of our big Sulzer loco working well and working hard makes all the effort worthwhile.

The loco was worked harder than ever at two Weardale Railway Polar Express seasons and over a 3 ½ year period at the two Norfolk Railways. Since 2015 we have celebrated 25 years in preservation and 30 years as a Preservation Society. We became a Charitable Organisation and received funds way beyond our imagination, thanks to two bequests from members who obviously wanted the Class 45/1 Preservation Society and our loco to prosper. And prosper the loco will, through the major overhaul that otherwise would not have been possible. It is thanks to this and the continued support of everyone involved with 45133 that the Society will go from strength to strength. Long may it continue.

Steve Dexter (2019)